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MARGARET;

OR,

PREJUDICE AT HOME, AND ITS VICTIMS.

An Autobiography.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CHAPTER I.

It was some time before I could obtain work, even at such poor remuneration as the Lesters received; for the starving female population of London amounts to some thousands, and it speaks well for their first principles that so many amongst them are ready to wear away body and soul in a drudgery that scarcely suffices to keep both together, rather than fall into pauperism, or a life of sin. Whilst my grandfather was slowly recovering strength, it was a grief to him to see how I toiled late and early for less than sixpence a-day. It was grievous to him to keep me in that low neighbourhood; and he spoke determinedly about not allowing me to remain there,

when he became once more able to exert himself. But besides having a great horror of again going out as a governess, I knew very well that I stood a worse chance than ever of obtaining a situation of the kind. I could not apply for a character to any of the persons I had lived with, though I had done my best to please all of them, and I could not expect that my word would be taken in such explanations as I could give. I myself resolved to try for employment in some millinery establishment, where I understood as much as nine shillings a-week might be earned, as well as two meals a-day, and the privilege of returning home when I was not required to sit up all night. This was the height of my present ambition; but I was soon made to feel that it soared too high. Mary Lester, who had herself vainly tried for such a place through some years, assured me that I should not succeed without patronage, as these situations were eagerly sought for, the young ladies filling them holding themselves far above those condemned to work as she did. I resolved to try, however; and as Aunt Betsy had unfortunately plenty of time to spare, not being able to procure constant work, she and I spent many weary hours in trudging to various establishments, not giving up our vain search until compelled by the fear of starvation in the meantime. And in order to understand how precious time is, it is

necessary to be reduced to this alternative of earning sixpence a-day or nothing. Work as hard as we could, my aunt and I earned no more than was sufficient to pay the rent, unless she luckily obtained a day's work out. It was little satisfaction to me to say I was not hungry, and eat as little as possible, for I saw that both my relations did the same, that we were all compelled to do it, and that the one sole satisfaction in the whole matter was the fair prospect of our all perishing together, and very speedily. Jem, who looked in upon us daily, received several commissions to dispose of such things as we could best spare; and in this way I parted with the finery purchased for me by Mrs. Bontoft. Poor Jem's face lengthened at these increasing proofs of poverty; and I believe that he frequently robbed himself when he declared himself ready to swear that coals, potatoes, or bread, were wonderfully cheaper at some distant shop, lying conveniently on his daily route, but which it would be quite impossible for Aunt Betsy to attend. If anything could have been more distressing to me than this idea, it was to see my grandfather wandering to and fro in the dingy room, too weak as yet to go out by himself, too far gone in blindness to be able to read, and too much perplexed by our situation to offer any counsel. There was the additional great grief of knowing that, pined as he

was, there was no chance of his health being restored; and as I sat at my monotonous and profitless work, from early morning until late at night, the old bitterness of heart, and impatience with Providence, and distrust in God, came back to me. I thought of my grandfather's blameless life, as compared with the worldliness of the dean of ——, and the libertinism of Colonel Leigh, and I could not understand why—if these were alike eligible for salvation—all this straying into error and trying in the furnace of affliction should be needed. I felt sure that there was no wisdom in so burdening my own mind with these perplexities; that I could have loved God better and more if I had been allowed to loathe his creatures less; if I could reasonably have entertained one thought of thankfulness for the life forced upon me, whether I liked it or not.

Gradually we were compelled to understand that these depths of destitution contained a lower deep, to which, in all probability, we should have to descend. We were lodged even magnificently for our means; we were not able to pay this high rent, and Jem was eventually applied to, to procure us cheaper lodgings.

But we dragged on for a wonderfully long time—nearly three months—before we came to this. During that period the necessity for sitting close at work prevented my seeing much of the

two sisters, or of Mrs. Graham, though I saw and heard enough to embitter my thoughts still more, and drive me further back from all trust in Providence. Of little James Graham, however, I saw a great deal; for not a day passed without his coming down to our room, and he would recite for us his store of patriotic verses, or sit, by the hour together, reading the Bible to my grandfather. I wondered what God meant to do with this child, whose sympathies were so strong for whatever was good or noble, and whose prospects were so clouded, whose position upon earth was so abject.

I was one day hastily called up stairs by Susan, who said that Mrs. Graham had been taken ill. Aunt Betsy was out, and I went. I entered the room, and found her in a fainting fit. Mary was bathing her face with water, and James was chafing her hands, and looking up to her piteously.

"She will soon be better," said Mary; "I have often seen her in this way before. Now let Miss Marples take your place, James, and go to your sisters, there's a good boy."

"I don't like to leave mamma so," said the boy.

"But Ellen and Lilly are frightened," said Mary; "do go and tell them mamma will be better directly." And the boy left us. "I sent

the children into our room, they cried so," continued Mary, as I commenced chafing Mrs. Graham's thin hands; "she has been to see her husband this morning, and she says they are killing him, and it is just breaking——"

Here Mary broke down, and large tears fell from her eyes upon Mrs. Graham's face.

"You see it is just breaking her heart," continued Mary, rapidly; "and when one thinks what sweet children those are, it is quite pitiful. She is half starved, besides, poor thing! If one only had a little wine for her—but where to get it!"

I had often thought of the profusion of wine at Mr. Bontoft's when I saw my grandfather's weakness, and remembered that he, too, was half starved. Yes, it was where to get it for necessity! I had seen Mrs. Graham before, several times. She was a fair, delicate woman, still young, and had evidently been well brought up. There was the curse of refined feelings upon her in the midst of this destitution and helpless endurance.

Presently she sighed heavily, and opened her eyes, and looked round the room.

"My children!" she said.

"They are in my room," said Mary; "let them stop there till you feel stronger. Miss Marples will wait here, while I make you a cup of tea."

"Oh, no, no!" she said; "I feel better now."

But Mary made me a sign, and left the room, and just as she went out James peeped in, and his mother saw him.

"My boy!" she exclaimed, extending her arms, and he rushed to her.

I shall never forget the look of yearning love and deep sorrow with which she uttered those words, "My boy!"

"My child, that I hoped so much for only a few years back!" she continued, bending over him: "and dear, kind papa, that would have laid down his life for any one of us!"

"Don't talk in that way, mamma," said the boy, lifting up his swimming eyes; "you make me feel so unhappy."

"I won't, darling!" she said; "you shall not be teased, you dear pet! Mamma will be well soon, and then—— Oh, God!" she continued, with a sobbing sigh, "then we may do better. I am wasting your time and mine too, Miss Marples," she said, turning to me.

"Don't think of me," I said. "Shall I fetch my work and sit with you?"

"You are very good," she said; "I have met with a deal of kindness: but, oh! my trouble is heavy."

As she turned away her face, and I watched its expression of intense agony, I had some

difficulty in restraining myself from falling upon her neck, and weeping away some of the pent-up sorrow that lay like lead upon my own heart.

I went down to my grandfather, and explained how matters stood, and then went with my work to Mrs. Graham's room again. Mary brought in a cup of tea, and then we three sat down at our dreary work together, and James proffered to read to us. The younger children, two pretty, gentle-mannered, little girls, remained with Susan. I had before observed how they could sit playing for hours together in a nook, hungry, and with no toy to entertain them, and extracting amusement out of their own yet inexhausted spirits.

As James read I could not help wondering what we should do if he was not reading—how we should converse together—we whose hearts were all so full of bitterness, and anxiety, and sorrow. There was no topic for us in the wide world; its pleasures were nothing to us, and we were sinking under the terror of its oppression—a terror that froze up our words. There were almost impassable gulfs for all of us to overleap before we could speak hopefully of a promised life beyond the grave. That loving mother's thoughts were chained to a world in which her children were yet so young—in which they might suffer wrong, and drink deeply of the cup of

sorrow, and be driven to the sins of necessity. (There *are* such sins, O ye who live in silken ease, fenced about by all the proprieties of life, and God is the judge of them!) Mary and I had a long career of unrequited toil before us, and the imperative wants of every day bound us, like slaves as we were, to the present.

We were seated thus when a knock came to the door, and Mr. Smithson entered. Mary and I rose up, and we went into her room. We found Susan reading a newspaper. The two children were evidently happy in their play.

"O Susan!" said Mary, "do attend to your work, that's a dear."

"I'm tired of work—nothing but work!" said Susan; "and I believe you are all blockheads! You won't read, and you don't know how the world's going on. There's plenty of people that would help us if they only knew how we suffered. How are they to know anything about it if we don't tell them? Here's a lord, a real lord, that talks so nicely in this paper about poor people like us; I wish we could see him, or that you would write to him, Mary; I'm sure he would help us, and Mrs. Graham too."

Mary shook her head, but this speech of Susan's helped to mature an idea that had been germinating in my own mind during the previous

two hours. At Mr. Bontoft's I had read many modern works, whose authors seemed to be imbued with the genuine spirit of humanity. I thought that poor Mrs. Graham, the wife of an author so stricken down by the hand of God, had a claim upon these men that they would readily respond to. I said this to Mary then, but she again shook her head.

"Mr. Smithson is a man of the world, as well as a kind-hearted man in himself," she said; "you may depend upon it that he has done all that could be done in this way. But he will be sure to come in before he goes; we might mention it to him."

Poor Mary! how apathetic she seemed! how hopeless about everything save drudging on from day to day! This was common sense, which taught her to expect nothing better from the world; Susan and I monopolised all the genius, and there was a wonderful power in it. I even determined to speak to this Mr. Smithson myself.

And Mr. Smithson presently came in. What a singular face his was! Ugly and chubby, and with a twist in it that made one side longer than the other! An excellent comic face it was, no doubt; but the present expression of thoughtfulness sat oddly upon it. Do what he would,

there was a drollery about it that made me consider it especially lucky that none of us were in a mind to laugh.

"Well, how are you all getting on?" he said.

"Much as usual, Mr. Smithson," said Mary.

"Work, work, eh?" he said; "all flat, stale, and unprofitable? Never mind. Here, you, come and feel in my pockets."

This was addressed to the two children, who ran up to him and dived into his coat-pockets, and drew forth sundry packets of sweetmeats and biscuits, and ran gleefully into their corner again.

"So there's no news stirring in your little world?" said Mr. Smithson, placing his hat upon the table and seating himself, and, to my astonishment, giving his face a twist that sent all the preponderance to the other side of it. "You remain *in statu quo?*"

"Yes, I believe so," said Mary.

"No beautiful variety to variegate existence in this world, noted for its changes? Pshaw! How ridiculous it is!"

"What, Mr. Smithson?" asked Mary.

"Devil a bit of change do I see, go where I will," said Mr. Smithson. "Nothing but the same penury, and strife, and suffering, the same bloated pride, and pretension, and humbug. Instead of supplying one with wit, the world brings one to one's wit's end;" and he drew his fingers

through his profusion of dark hair in a desperate manner.

"Poor Mrs. Graham has had another fainting-fit to-day," said Mary. "Can nothing be done for her, sir?"

"What the deuce right have *you* to trouble yourself about Mrs. Graham?" said the actor, making a grimace. "Why don't you wrap yourself up in your—hem! Well, I suppose you have nothing comfortable to wrap yourself up in. Naked we came into the world, and naked we shall go out of it; but it's too bad to be naked all our lives. I say, Susan, look me up that paper."

"Here it is, sir," said Susan.

"Anything worth reading in it?" said Mr. Smithson.

"Oh, yes!" said Susan; "I've been reading the speeches of Lord Marchtown. Isn't he a kind man?"

"Lord Marchtown?" said Mr. Smithson. "A platform lord, all words and smoke. Well, you very green young person, what do you make of him?"

"Oh!" said Susan, tossing her head, "I'm sure if he knew of our troubles he would help us."

"You are, are you?" said Mr. Smithson. "Now, Susan, don't you think I'm a very ugly fellow?"

"You're not very handsome, sir!" said Susan, to Mary's evident dismay, for she looked up and reddened.

"Quite the contrary," said Mr. Smithson. "Now if I attempted to entertain the town with tragedy, action, and sentimental songs, the town would cast me off at once. I was born to my vocation, and cannot step out of it. It is just the same with a platform lord, who spouts sentiment and lectures for the people. He is great where he is, and you must let him alone. You won't damage him by attempting to take him out of his place, but you'll be sure to disappoint yourself. If you know of anybody that nobody else ever heard of, just apply to him for sympathy and help, but don't try the dodge on celebrities."

I thought this a good opportunity to chime in.

"Mr. Smithson," I said, "considering that poor Mr. Graham was himself an author, don't you think that some of our popular writers would help his wife and children if they knew how destitute they were?"

Mr. Smithson turned to me, with a twist of his face that brought the larger half of it on my side.

"Oh, that's your particular kind of worship, is it!" he said; "you make demigods of authors."

"No I don't," I said. "I worship nothing human; I have little faith in humanity altogether. I only speak of this as a possibility."

"Egad, Miss —— What's your name?"

"Miss Marples," said Mary.

"Miss Marples," continued Mr. Smithson, "you've the right sort of wisdom to begin life with. Distrust is said to be an ungracious thing, but it saves a great waste of feeling. Now, as you concede that authors are only men, I can come to the point at once with you. An author revelling in fame and wealth is not the sort of man to feel for destitution, though he can afford to say a deal about it in books. A poor devil of an author, who can scarcely live himself from day to day, will be much more likely to sympathise and share his crust with you. James Graham, a writer of considerable power, and a very voluminous writer, too, was little known, as his name seldom transpired. No one could gain any glory by helping him—another great drawback in this world, where people like to have their good deeds known. Besides, there are hundreds of like cases, and the few that will help cannot do much. Well, the fact is, a great many amongst us are born to a life of suffering, and we must fight through it as well as we can."

Everything I heard corroborated the fact that the rich and the middle classes, while they make

use of the poor for their own convenience and of necessity, hold them aloof, as something loathsome to the sight and touch; and, much stronger in their prejudices than any slave-holder ever was, (for *he* does not shrink with horror and disgust from the human chattel that he buys and sells), produce in England such a wide line of demarcation—not between vice and virtue, ignorance and knowledge, talent and imbecility, but between poverty and wealth, as is met with nowhere else on the broad earth amongst creatures of the same spirit and clay. I cannot be solitary in my belief that this system is highly favourable to the growth of infidelity. The pauper who cannot learn from parish chaplains that he may one day sit down in the kingdom with a lord or duke, or, to strain a point, even with a prince or king, may by chance seize the idea that Christ will be less fastidious; but the degradation of his state has eaten into his soul and made it abject, so that he entertains more reverence for, and more fear of, a wealthy and influential man in the world, than he possibly can entertain towards God. It is the same with the slaves of both sexes, who fancy that they are independent because they are free to drudge, as no slave ever did, for a pittance too meagre to sustain half a life, or to lie down in their garrets and cellars and die at once.

I only saved myself from this state by refusing

to bow to anything. That likeness to God within myself sufficed to me; I was not to be subdued by the craving necessities of the body; I would not voluntarily lie down under the wheels of this great moral Juggernaut, whose victims might not rejoice in the sacrifice they were compelled to make.

Starvation and contempt only served to make my resistance stronger. I had enough of both to try my powers of endurance. In the month of March, in spite of every drawback, my grandfather gained sufficient strength to be able to walk out. He renewed the subject of my obtaining another situation, and I saw that he was determined to send me from home if possible. In this matter I was compelled to yield, for many reasons, independent of the fact that I never had any inclination to resist what I found to be my grandfather's decided will. Considering how little I could earn at needlework, it was easy enough to prove to me that my absence would not make those left behind worse off, whilst I might at least stand a chance of helping them. My wardrobe had decreased and was growing shabby, and it was evident that if anything in this way was to be done there was no time to be lost. Once more my grandfather and myself proceeded to the register office, having made a great effort to obtain money, and I received the address of a

lady who wanted a governess to instruct five young children, and who bargained for piety and humility as indispensable qualifications. Nothing daunted by this, but with a misgiving that this pious lady would be more difficult to deal with than any of the others, I set out for her residence, accompanied by my grandfather, on the following morning. We had agreed that I should refer to Mrs. Wilton for my character, for as I had given her entire satisfaction, except in the one respect of not being able to clothe myself out of nothing, we both thought it possible that she would not say anything to prevent me from getting another place. I had a suspicion, which I kept to myself, that Mrs. Bontoft's interested patronage had injured me in this quarter; but I had committed no absolute wrong in accepting an offer that promised well at a time when I was quite free and almost penniless.

Mrs. Reynolds, the lady upon whom I called, resided in Portland Place. There was no evidence of self-denial about this abode of piety, which appeared to be sumptuously furnished, or in the gaudy livery of the servants, or in the luxurious dress of the lady herself. I underwent a strict examination, especially with regard to my religious principles, and here I could assure her that I had been strictly brought up to the Church. This lady stated her terms to be sixteen pounds

a-year, out of which I was to pay for my washing. Still, scarcely sufficient to provide me with decent clothing, and the great hope of my heart was as far from being realised as ever, I gave my reference, and was desired to call on the following morning.

On the following morning, when the footman opened the door, I fancied his look portended no good. He left me standing in the passage while he went to announce my arrival, and presently Mrs. Reynolds walked down stairs. She paused at some distance from me, and surveyed me with a look of virtuous indignation.

"I am really astonished, young woman," she said, "that you should have had the assurance to refer me to Mrs. Wilton. She tells me that she found you very deceitful and unthankful, that she raised you from a state of great poverty, and that you requited her by worming yourself into the confidence of her friends, and spreading reports about her as false as they were scandalous. I don't want to hear any reply; an attempt to justify such conduct could only be worse than the conduct itself. I am satisfied that I have had a lucky escape. John, open the door."

The lady swept away before I could make any reply. The servant, who had stood by all the time, opened the door, and I had nothing for it but to walk out. If I had not stood convicted, I

had felt degraded by this unexpected attack; and the fierce passions that lay slumbering in my heart were roused into a tempest of wounded pride and indignation against those whose position gave them an advantage over me which they were so ready to use ungenerously and uncharitably, and without allowing me a chance for self-help. No wonder there is so much servility and hypocrisy in England, when it is well known that the testimony of a superior is all-powerful, whether right or wrong, unless the matter becomes public, and public decorum demands that justice take its course. Even this latter is not always the case. As for me, what did these women care whether they cast me forth to starvation or to sin? With Mrs. Bontoft and Mrs. Brown I should have fared no better; the one would have enlarged upon my impertinence, and the other on my vulgarity and deceit.

The greatest agony in all this was having to explain to my grandfather. As we walked along I softened the account as well as I could, while wishing to impress upon him the uselessness of seeking further for a similar situation. This was scarcely needed, as we had neither money nor time to waste in the search.

"God help us!" said my grandfather, after remaining silent several minutes; "this has been an evil place to us!"

And what other place in broad England would have been better? It was the fault of a system, not of a particular spot; had we fared any better at——? What was to be done next? That was the question, and none of us knew how to answer it. I returned to such work as I could get of necessity. Aunt Betsy laboured at the same drudgery, rarely being able to get anything else to do. Our clothes and everything else belonging to us were disappearing fast, and we knew that we were rapidly approaching a state of utter destitution.

I had often thought of uncle Stephen during these long and painful months of our absence from him, and contrasted his uniform and disinterested friendship with what I had met generally from the world. I did not see that Christianity made people better; the most rigid church-goers were the prosperous, who seemed to be uniformly selfish, and overbearing, and vain-glorious; and those accounted as pillars of the church were the least charitable and gracious of all. If I respected what I saw was good in my grandfather, I could not help being aware that his principles chiefly served to make him a more easy prey to the vicious and the powerful, and I turned with impatient disdain from the thought of following in his course. This spiritual disobedience, which I could not help, was not accompanied by any out-

ward act of rebellion. Under any circumstances, I would not have renewed my intercourse with Uncle Stephen without my grandfather's sanction. As his name was never mentioned amongst us, I had little hope that one who dreaded the effect of his principles more than poverty and death would ever remove the decree that kept us asunder.

But all this served to convince me that my grandfather was short-sighted as well as weak-minded. Why would he not understand that I was in greater danger of being driven to infidelity by my communication with Christians, than I could have been by any mere assailing of Christianity from Uncle Stephen? The separation, too, from this early friend gave the charm of distance to all that had been amiable and attractive in his character, softening down its more rugged aspects, and drawing me towards himself, if not his principles, more and more.

Early in March Mrs. Graham's husband died. Mr. Smithson, who saw him the day before his death, declared it to be his conviction that he had died from the effects of ill-usage. He asserted that he had seen his body covered with bruises, the effect of blows, and that he had threatened to expose the servants of the institution, who had laughed at and defied him. Whether this harrowing statement was all true or not, it had its destined effect upon me. I more than ever loathed

a country in which such atrocities could be perpetrated by the strong against the weak; where usage rendered remonstrance availless; and in which the emptiest forms of religion served to screen iniquities that the heathen and the savage never dreamed of. Under the same roof where I dwelt there was agony that I could not bear to witness. I was a coward when looking upon distress that I could not relieve, sorrow that I could not minister to. Both Mrs. Graham and James had clung to a hope that the husband and father would eventually be restored to them, and I shrank from the details that Aunt Betsy brought me from time to time of their overwhelming and wordless grief. I did all that I could do; I sat two days and nights working incessantly, unable to think of sleep, not feeling the want of it. Aunt Betsy, to her honour, and my grandfather too, devoted themselves to the desolate woman. About one o'clock on the second morning, whilst Aunt Betsy was yet up stairs and my grandfather lay sleeping in the closet, the door of our room was opened, and some one entered. I did not lift my eyes from my work; I knew that, whatever was coming, it would come soon enough for me. I did not even stir when I was aware that some one sat down near me and breathed heavily.

"I believe I shall hang myself some day; I see no help for it," said a voice that I recognised to

be Mr. Smithson's. "The misery up yonder is enough to make one hate life. Miss Marples, are you listening to me?"

I lifted my head and looked at him, and turned to my work again.

"I have been talking to Mary," he continued, "and now I must talk to you. You are in the same house with these poor creatures; you all sympathise with them; and I have no one else to trust to. To-morrow I am compelled to go into the country to fulfil an engagement. I'll tell you exactly how the case stands. When poor Graham first fell into this state, overtasked by anxieties and incessant mental labour, a few amongst those who had known him contributed from their hard earnings a weekly sum for the relief of his wife and children. One by one these contributors have fallen off, for months have elapsed, and most of them are needy men. I have myself a wife and seven children, and I cannot keep out of debt. You must know that Mrs. Graham could not keep herself and her children by needle-work, even if she had health, and my opinion is, that she will never recover this blow. Now it seems a hard thing to say, but it must be said—they must all go into the workhouse."

My work dropped from my hands and I looked up.

"What! that dear boy?" I said.

Mr. Smithson turned his head away and blew his nose.

"Yes," he said, "that dear boy. God bless him! he's a noble little fellow, and I love him as if he was my own: but what can I do? I've been speaking to the parish authorities about them to-day; and to-morrow, I expect, they will be looked after. Don't drop your head in that despairing manner, Miss Marples; I look to you to set an example of firmness. As to poor Mary, she is quite prostrated. You see how this unhappy lady and her children will need to be sustained. As to me, I promise before God, as I did to her to-night, that I will never lose sight of her children. You may think that mine is a hard task when you come to consider that I am compelled to act the part of a buffoon every night for the amusement of the public with the burden of these thoughts upon me. Unless we are made of stern, enduring stuff, we may as well lie down and die at once."

"I cannot see them," I said; "I cannot see her or James."

"This is a weakness that I did not expect from you," he said; "it is cruel to them. It is better to go where they are going than to live here and starve, or be turned into the streets. You see the alternative. Something may be done hereafter: God knows!" he continued, pushing his

fingers through his hair, and making an odd, buzzing noise with his lips. "When they are yonder, Miss Marples, it would cheer me very much to know that they were sometimes visited; it would cheer them. If only for the sake of that dear boy, say that you will go. He loves you very much."

I felt a strong inclination to weep, but heart and brain seemed alike dried up.

"I promise you," I said; I could not say anything more.

"God bless you!" said Mr. Smithson, rising hastily, and extending his hand. "I don't know when we shall meet again. I shall be some months absent, and Mary will write to me. I shall hope to find you here, but——"

He wrung my hand, passed out of the room, and I never saw him again.

I had passed about two hours more alone when the door was again opened, and little James came hastily forward, and flung his arms around me, and buried his face in my dress. I threw my work down and drew him closer towards me.

I had not seen him before since we had heard of his father's death.

"Dear boy!" I said, "you must be a man, indeed, now, and console your mother!"

He lay heavily upon me for several minutes, neither weeping nor speaking.

"How came you to be up at this hour, James?' I said; "it must be three o'clock"

"I've been to bed," said James, lifting up his face, that was very hot and flushed; "I've been sleeping in Mary's room with Susan, and Ellen, and Lilly. No, not sleeping; I've been waking and thinking there. I thought I should like to go and kiss ma again, so I got up and dressed myself. I kissed all them, too — you know who I mean; and then I went into ma's room and kissed her. Mary was asleep there, but your aunt was sitting up, and she scolded me, and said I must try to sleep. But I can't sleep, Margaret — (I had taught him to call me Margaret). I kissed ma again, and she did not notice me, though her eyes were wide open, and she did not speak a word. You'll remember and tell mamma that I kissed her, Margaret."

I thought the child's mind was wandering.

"You shall go to bed now, darling," I said, "and to-morrow I will talk to you. Come, let me see you up stairs, James; you will be ill."

"Margaret!" said the boy, suddenly starting from me, and standing erect, and throwing his head back proudly, "I know what they have all been talking about — Mary, and your aunt, and Mr. Smithson. I heard Susan say we were going to the workhouse. You won't say it's not true, Margaret, because you know it is. But

they'll never get *me* into the workhouse, Margaret."

"My dear boy!" I said, holding out my arms towards him, but he put them back.

"Listen to me," he said; "Mary does nothing but cry, and nobody will listen to me. For papa's sake, for mamma's sake, I won't go to that place. I am old enough to do something for myself. I can go errands, I can do work, and there is plenty of work to do. I can do anything but go to that place,—anything but leave you all, Margaret!"

And he came to me again, and clasped his arms round my neck, and put his soft cheek to mine.

I held him in a long embrace; at the moment I forgot everything beside himself. Oh, my God! how much I had learned to love that child!

"Margaret," he said at length, raising his sweet face, "where is your grandfather?"

"He is asleep, love."

"In there?" he said, pointing to the closet.

"Yes, love."

"Can't I kiss him?"

"Not now, darling; you shall when he awakes in the morning."

"Nay, but now, Margaret. I have a fancy to kiss him. You call me a pet, and you won't humour me! See! I'll just go in on tiptoe, and I won't wake him. Shan't I?"

There was no resisting him. I allowed him to go, and he went and came back to me.

"I have kissed him and he did not stir," he said, speaking in a low tone. "Do you know, Margaret, when I think of heaven, and I often do, I always seem to see your grandfather there —as if he was there already: that's silly, you know, but I can't help it."

"You will meet him in heaven, darling!" I said: and at the moment I spoke as I thought. How strangely I wavered betwixt that heaven and this earth!

"Now I must go," said James. "How cold it is, Margaret! isn't it? Kiss me again."

I held him again in a long embrace. It wrung my heart to hear him say so little about what had evidently affected him powerfully; it was touching to see how he tried to feel as well as appear brave.

"Good night!" he said. "You will remember what I said to you, and that I have given you a dozen kisses."

I took the candle and went out upon the landing with him, and told him to go to bed directly, for he shivered. I held the light up, and watched him disappear at the bend of the stairs. Then I listened till I lost the sound of his small feet as he ascended higher.

It was a raw, cold morning, and I, too, shivered as I re-entered the room. I drew together the atom of fire in the grate, and brought my chair closer and resumed my work. I was glad that I had seen this child, yet I felt a strange uneasiness about him. I wondered if he would resist being taken to the workhouse, and how we should all bear to see force used if he did. Then I wondered if such a luxury as I coveted with my whole soul—the luxury of rescuing this family from a fate dreadful to all of them—had ever been understood and appreciated by those possessing the means of gratifying themselves and helping others. Did the hundreds of like cases of which Mr. Smithson had spoken supply a solitary instance of this union of earnest sympathy, and power, and enjoyment?

I did not sit down to bewail what appeared to be inevitable; I was proud, and readily excited to resentment. I contemplated with indignant impatience this system, involving a twofold suffering. Why was I cursed with this power of feeling for others—I, that had no means to help them or myself?

In the midst of many bitter thoughts, my uneasiness about little James was uppermost. I could not feel sure that he had gone to bed again, and I was pretty certain that he would not sleep. I fancied him sitting upon the stairs,

in the cold and darkness, brooding over what was to happen when daylight came; or listening at his mother's door, anxious to know whether she revived or spoke. I had learned from Aunt Betsy that she had fallen into a kind of stupor, and appeared indifferent to everything that went on. I sat tormenting myself in this way, but I resisted the impulse that would have led me to go and look after James. "I am tormented enough," I said; "why should I trouble myself further? If God can see this child, and understand what he suffers, and must suffer, and leave him without help, I can do the same. I shall be following a great example, if not a good one; I will not aid Fate in this determination to keep me down!"

If any sleek, unimpassioned individual, one of the comfortable growths of prosperity, should shrink at these thoughts as impious, I can still say that I consider them something better than his soulless apathy. The germ of nobler aspirations and gentler feelings was in them; if far from heaven, they were still farther from the grovelling selfishness of earth.

I sat till the day broke; and it was not till I felt my fingers too benumbed to work readily, that I found my fire had gone out. I was busy lighting it, when Aunt Betsy came in.

"Is James here?" she said.

"No; isn't he up stairs?"

"He's not with the children; I've just been to look at them. Have you seen nothing of him?"

"He was with me two or three hours ago. Oh, aunt, what has become of him?"

"Keep quiet," said my aunt; "I'll just go down and inquire."

He knew no one down stairs, and I had little hope that she would find him there. I forgot that I was cold, almost that I was wretched. I felt that it would be a happiness to me if she found him. I leaned over the banister, breathless with anxiety.

Aunt Betsy returned. She could hear nothing of him. I told her what he had said to me, and the truth flashed upon us both at once.

"Why didn't you look after him when he said that?" she exclaimed. "God help the child! what can have become of him?"

No idea of his intention had struck me when he spoke; I had burthened myself with profitless thoughts that shut out truth from the present altogether. Now I was bowed down by a terrible remorse and anxiety.

"Is Susan awake?" I said. "She and I had better go to Jem, and tell him to make inquiries in the neighbourhood."

"Do so," said my aunt, "and I'll wake grandfather."

I threw on my bonnet and shawl, and hurried up stairs. Susan was dressing herself, and the two children were both awake.

"Where's James?" said Ellen.

"He will come presently," I said. "Susan, I want to speak with you."

I drew her outside the door, and told her what we feared had happened. She was not without feeling, for she began to cry, and told me she would accompany me directly. I went down stairs, and waited for her. Presently we proceeded together to Jem's cellar, and he, always ready to enter into a tale of distress, promised to find the boy if he was to be found in London.

It was a dreary feeling to me, returning to the house that did not contain him. The idea of his being lost in the world was terrible; death would have been preferable to this; and I thought that, under any circumstances, I could never know happiness if he was not found.

The day wore on. Aunt Betsy assured me that this new calamity would not affect Mrs. Graham, who seemed insensible to everything.

"The mercy of the Lord!" said my grandfather. "He is very good to us!"

I thought this an odd kind of mercy. I heard him with impatience as I thought of the certain suffering of the child.

Early in the day a workhouse official came to

fetch this family. My dislike to mere looking upon suffering kept me aloof; but I caught a glimpse of the pale, feeble woman, as they carried her down; and I kissed the children, and promised to come and see them, and to bring James with me if possible.

CHAPTER II.

THREE or four weeks passed and nothing was heard of James, and his mother had died in the meantime. In the meantime, too, our affairs became more desperate. I cannot tell what prosperity may do in the way of hardening, but I do know that adversity and suffering may render us callous to much. This perpetual punishment roused my rebellion, and I would not help fate to crush us down. I had no idea of resignation, which appeared to me to be nothing more than an acquiescence in evil. "There is nothing for it but to be indifferent," I said; "what does it matter how we get through this life, which we did not seek?" It became clear that we could no longer afford to pay so high a rent, and Jem was applied to, to know if we could not procure cheaper lodgings. He looked ruefully at us when this question was put. Our present lodging was cheap,

considering the accommodation it afforded. We required two rooms, and in the confusion of our trouble we had ventured to hope what was unattainable.

"I know what you might do," said Jem, "but you wouldn't like it."

He was urged to speak. His proposition was that my grandfather should sleep with him in his cellar, in which case he could find a small room for my aunt and myself for three shillings a-week. When we considered that Jem slept upon a heap of straw, my aunt and I remonstrated against this; but my grandfather overruled us, and it was determined that it should be so.

We gave notice to leave our present abode, and Jem procured us another lodging. It was some distance off, and I one day expressed regret at leaving Mary.

"It won't make much difference, Margaret," said Aunt Betsy; "Mary will soon be in a better country, and you would not see her much longer if you stopped here."

"You don't mean to say that Mary is dying, aunt?"

"She is, though; and a blessed thing, too, for her: what has she got to live for?"

I could not understand the blessedness of being allowed one fervid glimpse of life, and sickening

at it, and turning away with thankfulness to die. What was there that I could understand?

Two nights before we quitted the house, I lay restlessly beside Aunt Betsy, unable to sleep. I thought of all the early instruction I had received, and of which I had never been able to make anything. I was particularly puzzled by the injunction to love even our enemies, and yet not set our affections upon earthly things. I was singularly blinded not to comprehend that an enemy had an immortal spirit, in whose welfare God allowed me to feel a common interest with himself. I was troubled, and in darkness, and my thoughts were very bitter, when I heard a hurried step upon the stairs, and some one stopped at our door and knocked loudly. I called to inquire who it was, and Susan answered me,—

"It is me. Mary is very ill, and I wish you would come up to her."

I hurried on a dress and shawl, and accompanied Susan up stairs, Aunt Betsy promising to follow us. Susan, who had a light, seemed very much alarmed; as we approached the door she stopped me.

"Would you mind going in alone? Mary frightened me so. Look: she woke me, making such a dreadful noise in her throat; and when I got a light she stared at me and said, 'Oh,

Susan, it's hard to die!' Then I ran down to you. I can't go in again yet."

I took the candle from her and went in alone. I caught a glimpse of the white face, and the silence struck a foreboding chill to my heart. I approached closely and bent over her. Her eyes were wide open and fixed upward; her lips slightly apart, showing the white, glistening teeth; her hands firmly clenched. I placed the back of my hand upon her mouth. No breath came, and the lips were cold though her cheek was warm. I was aware that I stood, for the first time, in the presence of death.

I was awed, but not terrified; involuntarily I knelt down by the bedside and buried my face in my hands. Her death appeared very sudden to me, who had never observed any change in her. Was the young spirit yet hovering over that poor room, or with the sorrow had all the remembrances of earth passed away from it?

Aunt Betsy came in, and, without speaking, she closed the girl's eyes and crossed the clenched hands over the bosom.

"Go down now," she said, in a hushed tone. "Susan is frightened. She can sleep with you. I shall stop here. I can do all that is needed for this poor clay myself."

I rose up, and bending for an instant over the dead, I kissed the pale cheeks and forehead.

Then I went down to Susan. Her grief was very clamorous, and to the last she refused to look upon her sister again: death seemed to frighten her. On the afternoon of the following day a pauper coffin was brought, and at night Mary's remains were carried away.

I looked over her papers, and found several letters from Mr. Smithson, which I had seen before. They related chiefly to James, for whom he had advertised repeatedly, without any result. I wrote informing him of Mary's death, and gave him our new address.

Susan accompanied us, and remained with us for a time, for she could not bear to enter her own room even after her sister's body was carried out of it. We were all anxious about this girl, whose violent grief soon subsided, leaving her more thoughtless than before. We in vain tried to keep her to her work; upon some pretext or other she would go out, and at the end of a week she informed us that another girl had agreed to live with her and pay half the rent. My grandfather made inquiries into the character of this girl, and finding that it was altogether disreputable he remonstrated with Susan, who defended herself very boldly.

"I'm not going to work myself to death, as Mary did," she said. "The world thinks no better of us for that. I won't be clothed in rags

all my life, and half starved; and nobody has any right to say anything if I can better myself."

It was, indeed, a terrible thing for a young girl left alone in the world to look forward to a life of incessant toil and struggle for what did not suffice to keep soul and body together. It was still worse to fall into a career of shame and certain greater misery. These experiences were stumbling-blocks in my way. I thought of the pious parents, who had made a pet of this girl; of Mary, who had watched over her with such solicitude. It seemed a mockery to tell me that these, the lost, were happy, while this object of their solicitude was allowed to cast away all their counsel and rush headlong into a life of degradation and sin.

Two or three times after this Susan visited us, dressed in tawdry finery and bolder in manner than ever. The stern rebuke she met did not suit her, and we necessarily lost sight of one another. We had lost sight, too, of all those towards whom we had been drawn by strong cords of sympathy; sorrow, and difficulty, and privation seemed to lay waste with the speed of a tempest, and once more we stood alone upon the earth.

Alone, except for poor Jem; and how kind he was! He still contrived to get a little life out of us for himself, though what with hard work, and

poor fare, and anxiety, we had not much worth calling life left for ourselves. At a time of great difficulty, and as a last resource, I applied for a place of all-work at a neighbouring shop, and was dismissed with the brief intimation that my looks were against me.

In what respect they were against me I had not been informed. I felt more humiliated by this repulse than I had ever been before, though I did not know why. Was I too young, or too delicate-looking, or too well-dressed, or was there something worse in my appearance? It was not vanity that made me feel abashed, almost frightened. With everything else against me, it seemed hard that my looks should be against me too. Shortly afterwards I fancied I found the solution to this mystery.

Neither Aunt Betsy nor myself could find anything better to do than the ill-paid needlework, and we generally sat up at it half the night. One morning early I missed her from my side, and looking up I saw her extended at full length upon the floor. I went to her instantly, and spoke to her, but she did not answer. She was lying on her face, and I tried to lift her. But she was too heavy for me. I thought she was dead.

As fast as my trembling fingers would permit I dressed myself, and went out of the room. I knocked at the first door I came to, but it was

very early in the morning and no one answered me. I ran down stairs and knocked at another door, and a man's voice called out, "What's the row?"

I hastily explained how matters stood, and begged that some one would go up stairs with me. The man promised that his wife should follow me directly, and I went back. In a few minutes several women entered the room, for human extremity will readily excite human curiosity, if nothing more, though I do believe that the poor are generally willing to help one another. Aunt Betsy was lifted upon the bed, and all declared that she was still living, though quite insensible. Some said that she had had an attack of paralysis; others, that it was a fit of apoplexy. I asked if there was a doctor living near, and begged that one might be sent for.

"The doctors hereabouts don't like to come to poor folks, if they're not paid something beforehand," said one of the women. "Have you any tin?"

Guessing that tin meant money I wrung my hands, and said I had none. "Good God!" I said, "she surely will not be allowed to perish—some one will come to her?"

"We must have the parish doctor," said another woman; "here, I'll go an' fetch him myself," and she went out.

"Blow the doctors!" said a man, who put his head in at the door. "The woman 'll be dead afore thou gets back. I'll go and see if old Snelling won't come."

As far as lay in their own power, these poor and evidently coarse people gave us help. One of the women went for my grandfather, and before he arrived Aunt Betsy opened her eyes. I spoke to her, but she did not seem to know me; and we soon ascertained that the use of her right side was gone, the hand and arm lying quite as if dead. Her speech was gone too, but she made odd sounds, and struggled to get up, or to push us away with all her remaining strength. My grandfather was the first to arrive, and he bent over her with mute sorrow. The man who had been for a doctor returned to say that old Snelling refused to come; he said it was a case for the parish: and when the woman who went for the parish doctor arrived, it was only to say that he would come presently.

It was late in the afternoon when he at length did arrive. If this had been a case requiring immediate help, here was another instance of the power of poverty to crush us from the face of the earth. He examined her very coolly, and declared that there was no hope of her recovery, though she might live as she was for years to come.

This seemed as terrible as anything that could have happened to us. Aunt Betsy had been our main stay, being always determined and persevering, never murmuring if never hoping much; and I individually had more faith in her resolution than in my grandfather's patience. That she who had been so strong, and apparently in better health than any of us, should have been thus suddenly stricken down, was inexplicable to me, unless I concluded that Providence was in a league with the world to put us down. There was something like despair in my heart, but the old feeling of resentment and defiance rose up to neutralise its effects.

The doctor questioned us rather roughly about our means of obtaining a livelihood, and he regarded me with a glance that was particularly offensive. My grandfather explained his own partial blindness and helplessness, and the struggle that my aunt and I had to earn sufficient to keep us alive from day to day.

"Then I suppose she'll have to go into the house?" said the doctor.

"I did not think my poor sister would ever come to that," said my grandfather, clasping his trembling hands together. "But God's will be done! This poor child can neither attend to her nor work for her support; and I, alas! am incapable of doing anything."

"Well, I'll report the case," said the doctor. "I suppose, the sooner she's taken away the better?"

My grandfather only bowed his head, and buried his face in his hands. I longed to say something; I had never felt so strong to do as I did in this our worst extremity: all my past failures seemed as nothing, and I was determined to rescue Aunt Betsy from this cold and degrading charity, if I could.

"O grandfather!" I said, "do not permit this! I will work hard, if you will only help me to keep up the spirit of independence; if you will only not sink down as you do, lower day by day, till you make life unendurable to me! I will work, if you allow my aunt to remain with us; if not, you paralyse all my efforts."

"Don't reproach me, Margaret," said my grandfather, in his meek way. "I may have committed many mistakes in my life, but I always thought to do for the best. This child," he continued, turning to the doctor, "is unaccustomed to this kind of trial: you see how willing she is, but she has not the power to do what she would."

"I think you ought to be thankful to have your aunt well taken care of, eh?" said the doctor, looking at me.

I turned away from him, all the rebellious pride

of my heart flashing in my eyes. God help me, how I hated the whole world! how I loathed myself as the chief cause of all this misery! how the anger and contempt of the moment weakened my affection for my grandfather!

I could not sympathise with tameness, though I could readily feel for suffering. I could have respected my grandfather's piety more if he had boldly stood up in defence of the rights and doctrines of Christianity, instead of sitting meekly down to endure its penalties. If I must be made familiar with the hypocrisy, and outrage, and wrong practised in the name of Christ, I must also be permitted to speak, to rebel against it, or die. I considered it an oppression and a wrong that we, so willing to work and working so hardly, should not be able to save ourselves from being beholden to charity; that the charity thus forced upon us should be made as degrading and repulsive as possible. I was in the toils, however; and I only did what I could. I acquiesced outwardly in the necessity against which my soul rebelled; and Aunt Betsy was taken to the same workhouse in which Mrs. Graham and her children had been placed. We had both visited the latter several times, and had been struck by the great change in their manner and appearance. Their hair had been cut close, they were clothed in the workhouse livery, and workhouse influences had

changed them spiritually still more. Except that they appeared cowed and frightened, there was an almost idiotic apathy about them, that contrasted strangely with what they had been such a short time before. They received our caresses without making any response; they saw us come and depart, and preserved the dogged decorum that was enforced upon them. They wore the badge of the worst description of human slavery; for in the workhouses of England no man can bear himself like a man, and no woman struggle for the smallest privilege of her sex, and no child find exercise for the bounding thoughts and tender sympathies of childhood.

In proportion as I wrenched myself away from Christianity—and I did, altogether—what was there to bind me to it, save the suffering against which I rebelled?—I felt resolute about standing boldly in my own defence as an immortal creature; for betwixt me and those with whom I came in contact, there was something more than the clay that can so readily be beaten down by clay. My aspirations all tended to what was great and noble, though I had never been allowed to act greatly or nobly. There was a power within me superior to the outward power if I had possessed no hope or confidence in myself, there was no restraining influence to prevent me laying down life at once; and I did

not fear death, or believe that any judgment beyond the grave could afflict me as had done the judgments of this world. I was always within hearing of some spirit-voice that told me to go onward; I felt that my rest was not here, —not amid oppression and degradation—even if I might only look on to the retributions of time.

I resumed my work, with a conviction upon me that some new change would wrench me away from it suddenly; for the wildest hope would not lead me to imagine that I could pay our rent and get life out of it for my grandfather and myself. I could not keep altogether from Aunt Betsy, though she was not conscious of my presence when I went, and these visits encroached sadly upon my time. During an interval, when my grandfather was too ill to go out, or to leave his heap of straw in Jem's cellar, I one day went to the workhouse alone. I found my aunt much as usual; her bodily strength seemed great as ever, and when I bent down to kiss her she struck me.

"What, you're at it again!" said the nurse, seizing her left arm and shaking her violently. "If I had my way I'd put you in a strait-jacket, you old vixen! She'd kill every one of us if she could, the varmin! and she eats like a horse!"

"Be gentle with her," I said; "pray be gentle."

"Oh, yes, be gentle indeed!" said the woman; "take care of her yourself, and see how you like it. People troubling us with their relations, and then grumbling! it's very nice, that is!"

Troubling Us! This woman was a section of the great We, the potentiality of earth, whose possibilities may not be interfered with, and whose dictation aspires to absolutism. I observed this spirit in all the workhouse officials; a sense of being personally put upon by the destitution and affliction placed under their charge, as if they not only bore the trouble but the cost, and considered both as thrown away. Could humanity be more degraded anywhere, ye whose sympathies wander to far-off lands and to another race?

As I lingered at my aunt's bedside a man came up, whose dress, perhaps, entitled him to be styled a gentleman. The nurse curtseyed to him as he approached.

"Who's this?" he said, pointing to me.

"It's the woman's niece, she's come to see her," answered the nurse meekly. How meek she could be to that man, who had his own amount of worldly power over her!

"What do you dress in that flaunting way

for?" he said, rudely seizing the skirt of my dress, and dropping it. "You look as if you could keep your aunt yourself; and you could, I dare say, only you won't. The parish has enough to do amongst you. Do you work at all now, and what do you get a-week? Come, I'm not to be deceived: I'm up to all the dodges."

I had involuntarily glanced down at the genteel, but now faded dress, which my grandfather had bought for me, and which I had worn at Mrs. Wilton's. How could I summarily explain to this man that I had not the power of replacing this dress by a plainer one; that I was compelled to wear what I had, or wear nothing?

How, too, could I, at an instant's notice, quell the insubordination that was in me, and that was so antagonistic to the spirit of this free British soil? I spoke what occurred to me at the moment.

"If by work," I said, "I could have kept my aunt from this place, she would not have been here; if any power is given me in the future, I will take her away from this place,—I am not satisfied with the treatment she receives. I appeal to God from it and you!"

"She's drunk," said the man, turning to the nurse; "these handsome girls all come to that, the vagabonds! What did you let her in for?"

"Please, sir," said the nurse, humbly, "how could I help it? She was let in, and we've orders to receive visitors. I'm sure *I* don't want the like of her here!"

"Now go about your business," said the man, turning to me roughly; "and if you come here again, come in a proper state. I'll look after you sharply, you may depend upon it."

What had I to appeal to in that place? I cast one agonised look at my aunt, one glance of scorn and defiance at the two persons in whose charge I left her, and walked out. Drunken I was, but not with wine: long months of starvation had taken effect upon me, and the scene I had just escaped from confused me: my head was giddy, and I staggered as I walked on. I had a long way to walk, too, and I was in a crowd, and for a long time I did not notice, further than to hurry on as fast as I could, several smart taps that descended upon my shoulder, as if from a stick behind. I thought this might be the result of accident, and crossed the street; but the blows were repeated, and then I turned round. I found myself close upon a stout, red-faced, elderly man, who had every appearance of being wealthy. He was attired in the finest broadcloth, and there was a fat, self-satisfied, important smile upon his face, that was as

impertinent and offensive as anything could well be betwixt him and me. He held the identical stick in his hand.

"If you are the person who struck me," I said, "I will thank you to keep your distance. You have no right to annoy any one in the streets."

I turned and walked on, but he now kept up at my side.

"Come," he said, "you've a very pretty face, and I think you want a new dress. If you'll go with me, I'll buy you one."

This was the very way to excite in me a disgust that almost took away the power of speech. I hurried on in the hope of escaping him, but he kept up with me and annoyed me further, until I was compelled to turn upon him again.

"If you will not believe that this conduct is offensive to me," I said, "I must claim protection from some one. You miserable old sinner! cannot you understand that you have no power over me?"

I quickened my pace, and now he fell behind; but again and again the stick descended upon my shoulder as before. What more could I do than I had done to save myself in this case? Near home I got into a denser crowd, occasioned by some disturbance in the street, and I was crossing over to the other side to avoid it, when my

shoulders were suddenly seized, and I was fairly wrenched round.

"Who the h—ll are you that talk to respectable people in that way? you infernal tatterdemalion!"

It was the inflamed and angry face of the stout gentleman with the stick that met my now really frightened gaze. I had roused his choler; I had spoken insolently to the great man, and he was not used to such liberties. He spoke in a loud, passion-choked voice, and people turned to look at us. He had his revenge, and I got home as well as I could.

It was a sultry, hot day in July,—hot enough, God knows, in the close street where I lived, and in the attic, upon whose roof the fervid rays of the sun were poured down all day long. What with my exhaustion through want of food and rest, my mental suffering, and this intense heat, I thought during several minutes that there was nothing for it but to die. Feeling so exhausted as I did — too much exhausted to return to my work — what was I to do? I was in arrear with my rent; I had been threatened with expulsion if I did not pay it on a certain day, and I knew that I could not pay. My grandfather, too ill to leave Jem's cellar, was partly kept by him; and with all this help I could not manage to keep myself.

I sat a long time idling in the chair, upon which I had first fallen. One advantage of my experience was, that my thorough contempt for the people I encountered served to break down the ordinary barriers between us. I was not to be awed by money or power, used only for base purposes; and I regarded their possessors only as so many brute beasts. On the other hand, I loathed myself for thus lying at the mercy of those I was compelled to scorn. As to God — I did believe there was a God — I could not help it if he chose to look calmly and indifferently on during these contentions amongst his creatures. I came to the conclusion that I might only rely upon such power and resolution as were in myself for self-defence.

And what was the use of that power within myself, which just served to show me what was right and wrong, and wrench me away from infamy, and hold up the abuses of petty authority to my individual disapprobation? I did not know; but I sat with clenched hands and a determined will to do something, when Jem came in. I was afraid that my grandfather's illness had become more serious; I had seen him in the morning, and had promised to see him again in the course of the day.

"Now, don't you never fret for nothin'," said Jem, in answer to my eager inquiry. "That

blessed old creeter feels hisself worse, an' he wants to see you; but he'll be better in no time. I'll tell you what he's done for me—set me straight on the way to heaven, an' I mean to follow where he goes. Lord! what sinnifies all the good things of this here world when some day or other they must come to nothin'!"

I could not enter into the spirit of Jem's philosophy. I was just considering how I was to procure a little of the chief good of this world—money, without which it was pretty clear that my endurance would be tried too far. I could trace all the evil that had befallen me to the want of it. Poverty had not only subjected me to ill usage and imposition, but also to distrust. As the chandler's wife had said, "my looks were against me." My shabby gentility, even what small portion of beauty I possessed, only served to surround me with suspicion. The law of England requires that poverty be made as unsightly as possible—witness the effects of workhouse treatment,—and the poverty that has not yet come to this can only be supposed to be on the way to it. The world was evidently disposed to believe that I was thriving on a life of infamy.

Poor Jem, the only human being who would give me credit for anything better, was being put upon by our necessities. Even if my grandfather had been well enough to be removed, I could not

have thought of bringing him to the home from which I myself expected to be thrust forth. What was to become of me in that event I did not know; I was determined not to be driven into the work-house: all the rest was chaos to me. I rose up to accompany Jem, and we walked out together.

CHAPTER III.

As Jem and I passed along he pointed out to me two well-dressed people, a man and a woman, both of whom he said obtained a good living by singing at night in the streets. People will pay for a momentary gratification of the kind if they happen to be in humour with themselves, and at night the pleasure-going people, who are the most liberal, are chiefly abroad. I don't know what made this account dwell in my mind at the moment; I had no thought of doing likewise then: perhaps it struck me that this form of pauperism was more attractive than the other.

I found my grandfather very weak; he seemed to be sinking gradually. Jem had managed to prop him up by placing a sackful of shavings behind him, ahd when I had seated myself at his side on a low stool the faithful fellow went out, saving he should be back in no time.

My grandfather took one of my hands and held it between his own caressingly.

" My poor child," he said, " I did not think to bring you to this when, nearly two years ago, I came here in the hope that we might be able to live by our industry. It has pleased God that two of us should be stricken, and you are left to struggle alone. In this extremity I can only advise, I will not pretend to dictate to you. I have no fear that you will stoop to anything that is dishonourable; it is dreadful enough to contemplate for you a long life of toil and privation like this. I may not be allowed to remain much longer on the earth, Margaret, and then you will be still more desolate; then, too, you will have to be your own adviser, and you are young to be so left. I have tried to bring you up in the fear of the Lord, but I will place no further restriction upon you. You know the reason why I have kept you out of the reach of Uncle Stephen; I account the death of the body light in comparison with the death of the soul. Considering how I am leaving you, however, I can but leave you free to act as you think best, or as you may be compelled to act. Uncle Stephen would not allow you to want bodily, perhaps—I may say, I feel sure he would respect my last wish that he should not interfere with your spiritual welfare. I however dread the influence of such a man over

an impulsive creature like yourself, as much as I ever dreaded it. In him you have already found more truly Christian practice than you found in many professing to be the followers of Christ. I have not been blind to this fact, Margaret, all these months, and it has pained me to the soul. Now, I do not say to you, continue to keep away from Uncle Stephen; I cannot do that now: but while you honour him for the help that he will readily afford you, shun his dangerous sophisms, for there is spiritual death in them. If this must needs be, Margaret, it had best be done at once: not for my sake but yours, for it is little more I may require upon earth, and I do not personally shrink from a pauper coffin and grave—poor Betsy will have no better—though for your sake I wish it had been otherwise."

This speech was painful to me for many reasons. I was already sufficiently alienated from Christianity without the intervention of Uncle Stephen. I could not afflict my grandfather by telling him this truth; I could not reassure him by any evidence that I remained firm in my first faith. My pride revolted at the thought of throwing myself upon Uncle Stephen in this abject penury, and as a last resource, after not treating him well by disappearing so suddenly, and hiding from him so pertinaciously. I could not bear to contemplate my grandfather's death; I clung to the

hope of his recovery. There was no part of his speech to which I could give a satisfactory reply, so I answered evasively. Without intending to make a merit of shunning Uncle Stephen, I prayed to be allowed to struggle on a little while without his help. As I spoke hopefully of continuing my own efforts, my grandfather gazed wistfully upon me.

"There is one thing to be seriously considered," he said: "whether it is more degrading to enter a workhouse, and so be indebted to public charity, or to allow one's self to be a burden upon a poor fellow like this Jem. You cannot, my child, maintain us both by your labour; you must not be left alone in the world. I wish you to consent to my removal at once from this place."

I knew that it was madness to think of him remaining where he was, lying upon straw that scarcely protected him from the earthen floor, that seemed always damp; half suffocated by the close, impure atmosphere; and almost all along without attendance, as well as medicine or proper food. If I would much rather have seen him dead than the inmate of a workhouse, I had no thought of allowing him to linger on in this state until more than a parish coffin would not be needed. The very desperation of my thoughts

had struck out an idea, and I resolved to make one more trial before I gave up.

"Give me this one day, grandfather," I said; "I fancy that fortune is about to turn in our favour. If I am disappointed, I will not seek to detain you here longer than to-morrow."

My grandfather fell back exhausted with the effort he had made; he murmured a few words expressive of his acquiescence in what I thought best. I had never before had so much responsibility upon me; there was no one to control me in any way, and I launched out in a manner that neither Aunt Betsy nor my grandfather would have ventured to do. When Jem came in I sent him to fetch the woman whom I had seen in his cellar some months before, and who had lately been kind in occasionally waiting upon my grandfather. She had washed for him, refusing any further remuneration than an occasional pound of soap; and no one that has not been reduced to the same straits can imagine the relief that this assistance afforded me at a time when everything fell upon myself. Upon this occasion I gave her nearly all the money I had to purchase some sago and wine for my grandfather. I was convinced that his chief ailment was starvation; and I did not see the use of hoarding the trifling sum that my ordinary labour would not allow me to increase.

These petty cares, the sordid produce of days for whose return I felt no thankfulness, inspired me with an impatient disdain.

I left the woman with my grandfather. I could make no bargain with her for any further attendance than what her own natural kindliness of heart prompted her to give. I could not promise that I would pay for her time and labour; yet when I thanked her with a full heart, and she told me not to bother myself, I felt more confidence in her than I could have felt in any mere hireling.

It was still broad daylight when I went back to my room. The house in which I lived was tenanted by people who seemed to be honest, and who worked hardly enough, but, like many hard-working people in England, they were improvident. The men were generally drunk from Saturday until Tuesday or Wednesday; yet they could in the short time left earn enough for dissipation, if nothing for comfort. The man who earned most in this house was an ivory-turner and carver; he was very clever in his way, but his family was in a more forlorn condition than any other in the place, because he was seldom sober. Then the locality was cursed with all the horrible consequences of drunkenness,—quarrelling, foul language, fighting,—miserable wives with their eyes blackened,—more miserable children,

dragged up in any fashion that chanced, running about wild, always ragged and dirty, and half-starved, sometimes crouching in corners in terror, and sometimes running out in the middle of the night screaming murder. No man who brings himself to the workhouse by this reckless course of improvidence has a right to better treatment than he receives; and, doubtless, a large proportion of the pauper slaves of England is supplied by like means.

A portion of my work was lying upon a chair, and I tossed it away impatiently. I had not returned to sit down to *that.* I had tasted no food since the morning; and the woman who lived in the next room came in to tell me that her kettle was boiling, if I wanted to make tea. I accepted her offer; and I must say for the very poor, amongst whom I lived so long, that such little acts of kindness, apparently trifling, but very serviceable, are not unfrequent amongst them. I swallowed a cup of tea, without milk or sugar, and ate some dry bread; and then I sat down to wait for the night and darkness.

I needed both for the work I intended to do. The great scheme upon which I had been brooding half the day, and which I trusted to save me from something worse, was to sing in the streets, as Jem had informed me others did with advantage. I did not allow myself to shrink from this

task, distasteful and terrible as it was to me. My horror of the workhouse officials was something still worse; if I could have forgotten them for a moment, my courage would have oozed away. I called to my aid the contempt with which human beings had inspired me. What did their thoughts matter to me? As to the exhibition I was about to make of myself,—none knew me; none would remember me after passing out of my sight. There was, fortunately, no moon; and at about ten o'clock I walked out of the house. I had muffled myself up as well as I could, and I bent my steps towards a quiet quarter, not far off, in which were several genteel streets and squares. I persuaded myself that it would be best to begin in an empty street, if I could find one, and sing on until some one came, by which time I might become more used to it. I could sing with some taste and skill, for my grandfather and uncle Stephen had been excellent singers in their day, and both had taken great pains with me. I at length found a secluded street, made a desperate plunge into the middle of it, and commenced.

I had been singing some time when I heard a door open. Some one called,—"Here!" I went forward, and a footman placed sixpence in my hand. This good fortune took my voice away for several minutes; I had what poor little James

called a "choking in his throat;" but I made another desperate effort, and commenced again.

Presently I heard footsteps approaching; nearer and nearer they came, and then stopped; and I sang on. I lifted my eyes, and saw that two gentlemen were standing very near me; then I began to falter again, and was about to stop, when one of the two spectators came forward and seized my hand.

"Margaret!" he exclaimed, "why, this is worse than singing the songs of Israel in a strange land! Come with me."

It was Uncle Stephen, and he spoke with the old tone of authority. He placed my arm in his, still grasping my hand, and turned to his companion.

"You go home, George, and tell your mother I have found them," he said; and George disappeared. "Is this the best thing you can find to do in a Christian land?" continued Uncle Stephen.

"The very best," I said, "as you will acknowledge when you hear all. O Uncle Stephen! we have suffered since you saw us last!"

"But Thomas Marples to permit this! Is he dead, or has trouble driven him out of his wits?"

I explained that this was my first attempt of the kind; that my grandfather knew nothing of my intention; and I begged that all knowledge

of it might be kept from him. We were walking slowly down the street, when Uncle Stephen stopped.

"You must show me where you live," he said. "Are we going the right way?"

We were not, and we turned back. I told him he would be still more shocked when he saw the place in which my grandfather was lying; too ill, I feared, to be removed. I gave him a brief account of our troubles, and Aunt Betsy's affliction.

"Betsy Marples in a workhouse!" he exclaimed. "She who was always so energetic, so resolute to struggle for independence! Damn the ——! the devil!"

I had never heard Uncle Stephen swear before; I was sorry to see him so moved.

"I am almost grieved that we have met," I said; "it is too bad that we should bring further trouble upon you."

"Hold your tongue, Margaret; you know nothing about it," he replied. "There wasn't one amongst you fitter to enter this inhospitable wilderness of London than a child! For the future, I shall expect *you* to obey *me*."

I thought it necessary to announce him to my grandfather, who was too weak to endure any sudden emotion; he therefore agreed to wait outside when we arrived at Jem's cellar. I found the

latter standing over the fire, stirring some sago that he was boiling. He said my grandfather was much better, and had had a long sleep.

"I do feel stronger, Margaret," said my grandfather, who was now awake. Of course he did! He had simply been starved, and nourishing food was the remedy for his complaint. I told him, as gently as I could, of my meeting with Uncle Stephen. For a moment he seemed greatly moved; then he requested Jem to raise him up.

"You have brought him with you, I suppose?" he said. "Tell him to come to me."

I fetched Uncle Stephen in. Tears rushed to my eyes as I witnessed the meeting of these two, who had been friends from boyhood and through the course of a long life. Grasping each other's hands in silence, both looked eagerly into the face of the other. Uncle Stephen at length shook his head.

"A pretty dance you have led me this year and a half!" he said. "George and I have been looking for you all over London. I even advertised you, as I might have done any other missing articles. I promised, in the usual style, that if you would communicate with me all the past should be forgotten and forgiven, and that I would never interfere with your plans. Did that never meet your eye?"

"Yes," said my grandfather; "I saw the ad-

vertisement twice. Mr. Chaundy," he continued, turning to me, "pointed it out to me. What could I do, Stephen? If we had been prosperous, you would have heard from us, as I told you; as it was, I knew we could only bring trouble upon you, perhaps more upon ourselves,"

"O Thomas, Thomas, you might have trusted me!"

"I hope to be able to do that now," said my grandfather. "You see this child has no friend left beside yourself. As for me, I am nearly blind, Stephen, and I ought to hope that I shall not trouble any one long."

"You've had your own way long enough," said Uncle Stephen; "now I've got you fast, and I shall have no mercy upon you. I shall expect you to leave this place in the morning, whether you are well enough to leave it or not. The longer you stop here, the worse you will be. Where is that fellow gone to?"

He looked round for Jem, who, with his usual delicacy of feeling, had gone out. I opened the cellar door and saw him leaning against a lamp-post, and beckoned him in.

"Jem has been about the best friend we ever had," said my grandfather, turning towards him. "I don't know what we should have done without him."

"He's a fine fellow!" said Uncle Stephen. "I

saw that at first. So you don't preach one thing and practise another, eh? Shake hands!"

Poor Jem seemed to put out his hard, dirty hand, with some diffidence, but Uncle Stephen shook it warmly.

"We shall be capital friends by and bye," he said. "Now I must give you some instructions. I want to remove this old gentleman to-morrow; in the meantime, he must have some nourishment. What have you got to give him?"

Jem said he had some sago and wine, which seemed to have done good.

"I don't know that he could have anything better," said Uncle Stephen. "And so you are his nurse?"

"Me an' Sally takes it turn an' turn about," said Jem.

"And who is Sally?"

"A neighbour of mine, as'll do a'most anything for anybody," said Jem.

"You've got into capital company, Thomas," said Uncle Stephen. "Well, I must see Sally to-morrow, and you too. Now, Thomas, I shall take Margaret home with me to-night, and remember that you are to come to her. If you don't, by Jove, you shan't see her again!"

My grandfather smiled.

"I have nothing to say against your arrangement, Stephen," he said. "I don't know how

to thank you for taking such a heavy load of trouble off my mind. God bless you!"

"And God bless you, Thomas! I believe in God as much as you do, though Betsy always would say I didn't. Now keep yourself quiet till morning, you've talked enough. Margaret, bid your grandfather good night."

I approached and kissed him, and received his blessing, and I shook hands with Jem. Uncle Stephen drew him into a corner, and spoke with him for a minute, and then we two walked out. We walked to some distance in silence; and then Uncle Stephen called a coach, giving an address to a street in Camden Town.

We drove on for some time in silence; at length Uncle Stephen spoke:—

"I'm taking you to my sister's house, Margaret," he said. "In her young days she knew your grandfather and Aunt Betsy well: she ought to be glad to see you. My nephew, George, is of the right sort; though, confound him! I can make nothing of him. You must feel quite at home, remember."

I murmured out something. I did not feel quite sure of a welcome from these relatives of Uncle Stephen, who were, I understood, partly, if not altogether, dependent upon himself. He was not rich, besides; he had lavished nearly all he possessed upon them years ago, and it was natural to

suppose that they would regard with jealousy such claimants upon his bounty as we were. I was further troubled about my dress, remembering that first impressions go a long way. I had that night attired myself in the most dilapidated garments I possessed, and none of them were by this time in a very flourishing condition. I anticipated something disagreeable; but at the same time I felt that this new state was not to last long. It was only a step forward in the weary march that was to lead me—to what? The coach stopped. I saw an open door, at which stood a gentlemanly young man, with a lighted candle in his hand. He led the way into a nicely-furnished front parlour, and then Uncle Stephen introduced me to his nephew, and George Ratcliffe held out his hand very cordially.

"I am happy to see you, Miss Marples," he said. "I am sure I may well say so, in consideration of the state Uncle Stephen has been in about you; but I can truly say so on my own account. I hope you found the dear old verger and Aunt Betsy all right, uncle?"

Uncle Stephen shook his head. "Where is your mother?" he asked.

"She complained of headache when I got home, and went to bed. You see, uncle, we didn't exactly know——"

"Pshaw!" said Uncle Stephen, interrupting

him ; " ring the bell and tell Jane to bring some supper."

Uncle Stephen took off my bonnet and shawl. I wished to retain the latter to hide my ragged dress, but he would not let me. Jane, the single servant of the small establishment, who was very smartly dressed, eyed me curiously as she brought in and arranged the supper-tray. Uncle Stephen addressed me in French, and alluded gaily to old times. He reminded me how rigorous he had always been about keeping me at my lessons.

" I always had the future in my mind," he said ; " I wished to make you perfect in as much as I was able to teach. Now see the result: you speak French better than George here, who has been to a public school and a university. As a musician, I should not be ashamed to exhibit you anywhere. As to general knowledge, Heaven defend us from all that is contained in that little head!"

" I owe you a great deal in this respect, Uncle Stephen," I said: " and yet these attainments seem to be of little use to me in the world. Do you really think I shall ever be able to make a living out of them?"

" Why, if you dwindle down into an old maid, we may set you up in a school as a last resource," said Uncle Stephen. " As to drudging in the

ordinary governess line — that sublime idea belongs wholly to your grandfather. I never entertained it, nor do I now; nor the other plan either, just yet. Take a glass of wine now, and go to bed, for it's nearly one o'clock."

Uncle Stephen went out for a moment, and I heard him whispering with Jane in the passage. In the absence of the mistress of the house there might be some difficulty about accommodating me. George seemed uneasy: out of his uncle's presence he was, either purposely or helplessly, reserved. I sat upon thorns till Uncle Stephen came in the room again.

Presently he entered. "Jane will show you to your room," he said. "Now good-night, and mind you sleep soundly. To-morrow we will see about a thorough reformation."

He kissed me, and George shook hands with me, and I followed Jane to a back sleeping-room on the first floor. She was very civil, and showed me a bell that I could ring if I wanted anything. I found a night-dress on the pillow, and the bed looked luxurious enough to invite one less weary than myself to sleep. I could not sleep, however; I was already impatient with this new state of dependence, and what Uncle Stephen had said roused my anxiety as well as curiosity. It was not his intention to make a governess of me, and never had been;—what, then, did he intend me

to be or do? It was useless speculating on this subject. I only felt that Uncle Stephen had ill studied my character if he entertained any idea of condemning me to a life of dependence and idleness. The destitution from which I was just rescued had been accompanied by a wild sense of freedom from control that had an especial charm for me. I, who had all my life been so completely under the strict government of others, had a passion, if not talent, for governing my own affairs, which gained upon me after that brief trial of the sweets of liberty, under circumstances otherwise discouraging enough. The only one thought that gave me real satisfaction was the belief that my grandfather would now recover speedily. All the events of the last two years came back to me that night, from my first meeting with my father whom I detested, to my last parting from little James Graham whom I loved so much. I wished for many changes of circumstance, but this that had happened was not one of them; I was still left powerless as ever in myself. Late in the morning I fell into a heavy sleep, from which I was awakened by the servant, who came with her mistress's compliments to inform me that breakfast was ready. I was annoyed at having overslept myself, and hurried to go down, though I would have given a great deal to have been a hundred miles away.

My dress altogether was in a terrible condition when examined by broad daylight; and I was angry with myself for having accompanied uncle Stephen so readily, when I might have remained a night longer in my own lodging. Regret was, however, availless; I was compelled to go through with what lay before me. I descended to the passage, and was ushered by Jane into the back-parlour. Mrs. Ratcliffe was seated alone at the breakfast-table, and she rose at my entrance and extended me three fingers, which, when I touched them, seemed as cold and unpliable as might have been the three prongs of a fork. She looked younger than her brother, and might have been fifty-three or four; rather slightly made, fair in complexion, and with evidences of having been pretty. She was quite what is called lady-like in her manners; but that does not mean having the manners of a gentlewoman. It was the very excess of her politeness that gave me to understand how much of an intruder I really was. I inquired after the gentlemen, and asked if they had gone out.

"Oh, you are labouring under a mistake, I see," said Mrs. Ratcliffe. "They did not sleep here last night. My house being so small, and only having one servant, I could not do with them at all. They sleep at my son's chambers in Gray's Inn, and sometimes take their meals

there. What they are about this morning I can't imagine; however, my brother left word he should be here to dinner."

This disconcerted me very much, for the prospect of passing several dreary hours in the society of this very frigid lady would have been intolerable enough if I had not been so encompassed by perplexities and anxieties. I had, myself, managed badly, and Uncle Stephen had done no better, though he meant well; and the very best-intentioned men are the most liable to commit blunders in apparently small, but really important, matters. In his determination to take care of me, Uncle Stephen had overlooked or disregarded the commotion my sudden appearance would occasion in the orderly household of his sister. From her manner altogether, and from what she said, I could only understand that she was very much surprised to find me there, and that she was in a state of some anxiety respecting what was to be done with me.

"It distresses me to put you out of the way, as I must be doing," I said. "I expected to have seen Uncle Stephen this morning."

"Dear me! do you call him *uncle* Stephen? It seems very odd to me, you know, as there is not the slightest relationship."

Here was another repeller. My face flushed, and I said, "Having been taught to address him

by that title from my infancy, I scarcely knew how to name him in any other way."

"My brother has always been very eccentric, I know," said the lady. "In fact, it would have been a great advantage to him if he had married early in life; he has many extravagant notions that a wife might have corrected."

This speech, delivered in quite a cordially-confidential tone, was followed up by a string of apologies for the apparent rudeness of leaving me alone.

"The fact is," she said, "I have for several years past been in the habit of visiting every morning an old friend of mine who is bedridden; and if I missed once she would think directly that something dreadful had happened. I am really so sorry, but I hope you will excuse me."

I begged she would not mention it.

"If you want anything," she continued, "you have only to ask Jane; and I shall be back in an hour or two."

I was left alone in the very snug parlour; and I might have been placed there for the purpose of learning the real unimportance of externals in the matter of human happiness. I had been much happier in Jem's cellar. There was a bookcase and a piano in the room; but I did not turn to either. I sat lost in thought, or paced moodily about for several hours, during

which Mrs. Ratcliffe did not return. At length a loud knock came to the street door, and to my great joy Uncle Stephen entered.

"Now, how do you get on?" he said, holding out his hand, briskly; "all right, eh! Where's my sister?"

I told him she had gone out.

"Gone out!" he said, with a slight frown. "Oh, well, never mind. I only told her to be sure and be at home at dinner-time; and we dine here at four o'clock. Now, have you had any lunch?"

I said I did not want any.

"Oh, stuff and nonsense!" he said, ringing the bell violently. "Jane," he called out, "why don't you bring some lunch up? Come, make haste, I'm in a hurry."

I assured him that I could not eat anything; but he made me take a glass of wine and a biscuit.

"Now," he said, "put your bonnet and shawl on directly, and come with me. I've got a coach waiting at the door, and as we go along I'll give you all the information."

I obeyed him very gladly, and in a few minutes we drove off.

"I've given the driver the address of your lodgings, which I obtained from Jem," he said, when we were seated. "You must pay the rent,

and bring all your things away. George and I took your grandfather to a nice airy lodging in Islington this morning, and we left Jem to attend him. He'll be quite strong in a week, and then we shall get on famously. As to you, you must at present remain with my sister."

"Uncle Stephen," I said, "I feel grateful for your kindness, especially to my grandfather, but I cannot consent to become such a burden to you or your sister. I wish to do something to maintain myself. I have hitherto failed, chiefly through being unable to obtain a character. If either you or Mrs. Ratcliffe gave me one, I should, I dare say, do very well."

"I told you last night," said Uncle Stephen, "that I had no intention to hire you out. My views are at present altogether different, and I will explain them shortly. As to being a burden upon me, you know very well, or ought to do, that you will be nothing of the kind; nor can you very well be a burden upon my sister, seeing that she is quite dependent upon myself. I have some claim upon your obedience, Margaret, and I *shall* claim it."

One of the great facts of life is, that every individual's personal experience brings out latent truths, that can only be thoroughly understood or dealt with by himself. I had found this out before now, and it was the basis of my struggle

for some independence of action. I could not complain of Mrs. Ratcliffe's conduct to her brother, or say, what I knew to be true, that my presence in the house was a great nuisance to her, and that she regarded his interference in our behalf as a personal injury. I, who could scarcely be said to belong to anybody, dreaded above all things becoming a burden to any. I could not help thinking that Uncle Stephen's eccentricity was leading himself wrong.

"I know," I said, "that you have always been lavishly generous,—always forgetting yourself in others. I learned that long ago. All that I have learned since teaches me that I ought to have some reliance upon myself. I do not pretend to be wiser than you are, Uncle Stephen; but, circumstanced as I am, it seems clear to me that I ought to be placed in some way of earning my own living. I have been a burden upon others too long already; and the very few who care for me may not remain with me always. Don't you see ——"

"Oh, yes, I see," said Uncle Stephen, interrupting me; "I see that you are going to kill us all outright! Now, you very wise little person, since you will make an old woman of yourself before your time, let us talk reasonably together. You like to be independent; that is your great,—what do you call it?—*forte*. I want to make you independent. You would rather patronise others

than be patronised. Well, you shall patronise my sister: will that do? I am quite serious, Margaret; I hope to place you in a position that will enable you to do this; I expect to see you rise in the world, and drag us—her, at least—along with you. This is an old-cherished plan of mine, and I think you are in duty bound not to thwart it."

"You are mocking me, Uncle Stephen," I said. I could make nothing of his words.

"Bless my life!" said Uncle Stephen, "am I not old enough to know that getting through the world is no joke? I tell you I know what I'm about, and you must trust to me. There's only one thing I stipulate for;—you mustn't allow George to fall in love with you."

"Uncle Stephen!"

"Don't mistake my meaning: if he was good enough for you in all respects, I should wink at your running off together to-morrow morning; but he isn't, and I have other views for you. Now, you see, here we are; so make haste and collect your things. Take this purse and pay what you owe, and get some one to help you."

I ran hastily into the house, paid my rent the first thing, and then went up to my room. Here I changed my dress, and easily bestowed in one box all that belonged to me. Indeed, we had been compelled to dispose of so much, even to the boxes, that only one dilapidated trunk re-

mained, and this I gave to the woman who lived in the room next mine, and who helped to carry my box to the coach. When I was again seated, Uncle Stephen took out his watch.

"I've ordered the driver to go on to Islington," he said; "we've plenty of time to see your grandfather and get home to dinner."

I considered this very kind and thoughtful; and I said so.

"Oh! you think I can do right sometimes, eh, Miss Margaret?" said Uncle Stephen, laughing.

A very short drive brought us to the pleasant cottage-house, with a small garden before it, in which my grandfather now dwelt. We found him reclined upon a sofa in the parlour and Jem with him. And what an odd-looking Jem he had become! Uncle Stephen had clothed him from head to foot; not with new clothes, but good ones that fitted him. At present he looked awkward and confused, but very happy.

We passed half-an-hour with my grandfather, who already seemed much better, conversing chiefly about Aunt Betsy.

"I shall see her to-day," said Uncle Stephen; "and for the present I shall pay a weekly sum to ensure her proper attendance. Who knows? she may recover."

"And in the meantime what a burden we all are upon you, Stephen!" said my grandfather.

"Nay, if you begin that subject I 'm off," said Uncle Stephen, rising. "Margaret here has been harping upon it till I 'm tired. Oh, Thomas, Thomas! thou man of little faith! do not wrong our old friendship by talking and thinking in this way!"

There was scarcely any resisting the heartiness of Uncle Stephen. As for me, I was young and romantic, and what he had said to me filled my mind with many vain dreams. He might know more about me that I knew about myself; perhaps my father's heart had been touched, and he had seen that it was, at least, his duty to help me on in the world; perhaps he meant to adopt me (I knew that he was unmarried when I saw him last); perhaps he was dead, and had bequeathed me the means of independence. I had something to learn from Uncle Stephen, and I could not separate what he had said from this haunting idea of Colonel Leigh.

And though I really did not wish to see this relenting spirit in the latter—though I would much rather have risen up myself and kept aloof from him and his, circumstances made me contemplate, with satisfaction, such a second-best sort of destiny as the above possibilities promised. There was so much that I wanted to gain and to do—and at once! Relief, in the first place, from this heavy sense of obligation to Uncle Stephen.

Then the pleasure of myself providing for my grandfather and Aunt Betsy, and of prosecuting the search after dear little James Graham; and tending his sisters; and striving for the reformation of Susan. All this I wished to do, and what I considered a glimpse of the power to do it broke down all my patience. O money, money! did ever any one need money as I did?

The dinner that day was very dreary to me, with all my thoughts thus occupied, and my spirit on the alert after the unattainable. George came in just as it was served up. He appeared to be about twenty-eight years of age, and had good but rather heavy features, and was inclined to be stout. It struck me that he was very listless in manner, and slovenly in dress, for a young man; and he did not appear to be addicted to study or dissipation, either of which pursuits might have accounted for his appearance. I had been inclined to dislike him, but I changed my opinion before dinner was over. Uncle Stephen seemed quite at home, and Mrs. Ratcliffe was frigid and polite as ever.

"Sit here, Margaret," said Uncle Stephen; "you shall have George for your *vis-à-vis*. He's a sad, dull, ungallant fellow, but you must excuse him. You know you're a sort of cousins, though you meet now as strangers to one another."

"What nonsense you will talk, Stephen!" said

Mrs. Ratcliffe, glancing at Jane, who was in attendance.

"Not such nonsense as you suppose," said Uncle Stephen. "I should have been Margaret's uncle in reality, if, years ago, Betsy Marples had not refused me for a husband."

"How you talk, Stephen!" continued Mrs. Ratcliffe, evidently annoyed.

"It's quite true," said Uncle Stephen; "she refused me twice."

"Do tell us all about it, uncle," said George; his face quite brightening up with expectation. He did not notice his mother's attempt to frown him down.

"Well," said Uncle Stephen, "I first made an offer to Betsy when I was about thirty years old. She was a year or two older than me and not at all handsome, but there was a principle in all she did, and a sturdy independence about her, that pleased me. She heard me out, and answered me like a woman. 'Stephen Leath,' she said, 'I respect you, because you are an old friend of my brother's, and because I never knew you act unlike a man. I respect you too much to burden you with a wife, whose only portion would be an old bed-ridden mother; for I will never leave her, Stephen, and she shall not be thrown upon you. Let us be the friends we have always been, and say no more about it.'

I tried to alter this decision, but in vain. Some years after, when old Mrs. Marples died, I was in the same mind, and tried my fortune again. 'Stephen,' she said, 'you are looked up to as a thriving man, but you are not thriving: you know no more of the value of money than a child; you squander it on all sides, and I will not help you to squander it. I will be your friend and advise you, if you like to take my advice, but I will be nothing more. You have a position to keep up, and so have I. While David Marples (that was her brother) holds his head high above me, and disowns both me and my brother because he has money and we have none, I will not become the wife of any honester man. We must be friends still, Stephen, and nothing more.' This was the substance of what Betsy said, mixed up with some objections on the score of irreligion; which, however, went for nothing, as she had made up her mind independent of them. Now, if Betsy Marples had been a less nobler woman than she was, she would have been my wife."

"Well, I'm sure you've some wonderful things to relate," said Mrs. Ratcliffe.

"That's just the sort of aunt I've been wanting all my life," said George; "she would have given me good advice, and I might have profited by it."

"I'm sure that's very complimentary to me, George, considering that *I*'ve been giving you good advice all your life, and to little purpose," said Mrs. Ratcliffe.

"My dear mother," said George, "with the best intentions in the world, you haven't the knack of going the right way about it. You've always taught me that to keep up a genteel appearance in the world was the main business of life. Now I've discovered for myself that gentility is all smoke!"

"You've very odd, low notions, I know," said his mother, "and it's astonishing to me who you inherit them from. You would even have been mad enough to give up your profession, if you had not seen that doing so would kill me. You have not an atom of proper pride about you. Instead of directing all your energies to the maintenance of your dignity as a professional man, I verily believe you wouldn't care about turning to any common drudgery to-morrow."

"I certainly shouldn't, if my besetting sin, indolence, did not place an almost insuperable bar to my pursuit of so manly a course," said George. "I have, however, a horror of growing grey in this service, that may one day save me. It is a lamentable fact, mother, that if there be anything substantial about gentility, I have never been able to grasp it. I have always been mocked by

its shadows. I walk in and out of yonder old Gray's Inn like the ghost of something gone by, or the shadow of something yet to come, and not as a creature of flesh and blood, animated by the consciousness of having a purpose in the present, I have no vocation there, no pursuit, no position. I don't know a soul in the place—I am alone in my glory; and it sometimes strikes me that gentility and idleness would have been more formidable as a primal curse than labour, from which springs all the good there is upon earth. I suppose the meaning of the latter was, as Byron says, 'That curse shall be forgiveness!' Certainly we should get on very badly without it."

"You are quite eloquent to-day, George, for you," said Uncle Stephen. "If you can keep up a little longer, I should like to recommend to your serious consideration the folly of shirking people in the street, or so conducting yourself that no one can make anything of you. I have observed this several times. It is as if you took your indecision into the highway, as a special protection to your gentility; or are you really modest, after all? A great deal depends upon your allowing people a right understanding in this matter."

George reddened very much.

"The truth is, uncle," he said, "I got into this habit at school, and it has grown with my growth.

It had been so dinned into me that I must make none but genteel acquaintance, and gentility is so hard to be defined, that I never felt sure I was doing right. Then I believe I had a natural propensity to associating with what my mother calls inferior people; and what with trying to correct myself in this respect, and ascertaining what was exactly proper, I got hopelessly perplexed and confused."

Uncle Stephen laughed.

"Your getting into that state was your own fault, not mine," said Mrs. Ratcliffe. "I always gave you plain instructions to maintain your own dignity, irrespective of other people. If you had done that from the first, there would have been no question about your position, and no difficulty in upholding it."

"My dear mother, you don't understand it. The dignity of a schoolboy is a very small matter at best, and no one cares about it. In fact, by mounting the stilts, one only insures the certainty of being brought lower than agrees even with the dignity of the miniature man. At college I had no money to compete with the rich, and the studious did not take to me. Since I entered chambers it has been still worse. A briefless barrister has small opportunity for being fussy; and the fact is, a high head don't answer with an empty pocket. As to shirking people in the

street, Uncle Stephen, what's a poor fellow to do? Some of the barristers in my place, who have more work than they can attend to, have established a bowing acquaintance with me; but they will bow one day, and overlook me altogether the next. I can't look out for notice of that kind, and the predicament makes me nervous. If I see one of these big-wigs coming, I shoot out of the way, or turn back. I always had a horror of meeting acquaintances in the street, even intimate ones. It's constitutional, and I can't help it. Well, I shall not go the wrong way for loving greetings in the market-place."

"The fact is, that under an injudicious training for what you were never fitted to be, you have come to nothing, George," said Uncle Stephen. "I expect that you will rouse up some day and set yourself right. By Jove! if I could do nothing better, I'd set fire to Gray's Inn and run away by the light of it!"

"Well, I suppose I must do something desperate some day," said George. "I can't make matters worse than they are."

"I am sure you might make them a great deal better than they are by conducting yourself in a proper manner," said Mrs. Ratcliffe.

"But what, my dear mother, do you call a proper manner?"

"Why, I think you ought to throw yourself in

the way of those barristers who have shown an inclination to notice you, instead of shunning them as you do in such an undignified way. Here you have been nearly two years in chambers, and you have no business, and not a single acquaintance in the place."

"Come, mother, I have one, and a capital fellow he is, too."

"A poor attorney's clerk!" said Mrs. Ratcliffe, with a sneer.

"Poor enough, Heaven knows," said George. "He has a hundred and twenty pounds a-year, and a wife and seven children to keep out of it. He was an attorney himself, remember, once, and if he had had a little more money to begin with he would not have passed the prime of his life in slaving for old Reece, who keeps his carriage, and would see him rot in a workhouse."

"I wish you wouldn't use that language," said Mrs. Ratcliffe.

"No, George, be genteel, whatever you do, especially in speech," said Uncle Stephen. "As to that poor fellow, Elliott—a capital fellow he is, too, I believe—his position removes him out of the pale of your sympathy. You should certainly look higher, George, considering your position."

I saw that George in his simplicity, and Uncle Stephen out of pure malice of the sly and good-humoured kind, were getting Mrs. Ratcliffe into

a high state of irritation and wrath. Uncle Stephen seemed to see this, too, and he resumed at once the stern manner and authoritative tone, that seemed to me more natural to him.

"Now you understand, Eliza," he said, "that for the present Miss Marples must find a home with you. You have only to make it as pleasant to her as possible. As she has nothing better to do just now, and has some skill in needlework besides, I wish her to be replenishing her wardrobe. You can help her here, for you have excellent taste in dress, I know, Eliza. Margaret has the money, and you must superintend her purchases. I have a deal of business on my hands, and you won't see me again till to-morrow, at dinner."

"Can't you stop with me?" said Mrs. Ratcliffe, turning to George; "you can sleep on the sofa-bedstead."

"Why, the fact is, my dear mother," said George, and he stammered, and hesitated, and blushed, "I—I—that is, having nothing to do, you know, I have been employing myself in teaching the young Elliotts. You can't think how they are getting on! Henry and Lucy in French and all the rest in writing and reading. They've quite a natural talent for learning that makes it a pleasure to teach them, and they expect me this evening, and would be so much disappointed if I

didn't go. I'll stop with you to-morrow night, if you like."

"Well, upon my word, you're enough to drive one mad!" said Mrs. Ratcliffe. "I never saw anything like you!"

"Thou most veracious of fellows!" said Uncle Stephen, slapping George on the back; "I wonder if fate has in reserve for thee prevarication and a latch-key! Come, Eliza; be thankful for a bit of truth—a rare thing in this world!—for which I would vouch with my last breath. George might be better occupied for himself, but I know he never has any worse occupation than this. That is a great thing to say. Come, be quiet."

"I'm sure," said Mrs. Ratcliffe, putting her pocket handkerchief to her eyes, "he might as well turn schoolmaster at once; he would then earn something, at all events."

"Not a bad idea, either; eh, uncle?" said George, who seemed all afloat about his future prospects.

Uncle Stephen laughed again, and after kissing his sister and me walked out. George took leave of his mother and followed him, and then turned suddenly back and approached me, and held out his hand.

"I'm a very thoughtless fellow, Miss Marples," he said, "and you mustn't consider me uncivil, for I believe my thick head will only entertain

one idea at a time. Good-bye for the present. I hope you'll feel quite at home till we see you again."

George was evidently a generous fellow, but I could not help feeling something like contempt for him. I had no idea of a man allowing himself to be unnerved by the mere punctilios of life, while the glorious opportunities of his youth and vigour were slipping away from him unheeded. If I were in his place, I thought, I would be something decided, if only a hewer of wood and a drawer of water. There would have been no fear of my forming any serious attachment to him, if the resolution that strengthened within me from day to day had not put away from me every thought of the kind.

I obeyed Uncle Stephen so far as to expend upon such articles of dress as I most needed a portion of the contents of the purse he had left in my hands. Mrs. Ratcliffe, as constrainedly polite as ever, and evidently acting upon compulsion under her brother's control, accompanied me in my shopping, and readily agreed with me as to the prudence of being economical. Understanding that I had already filled the situation of governess, she supposed that her brother intended to send me out again in that capacity; and the idea seemed to afford her so much relief that, besides not being able to guess for my own satisfac-

tion what his intentions really were, I could not disabuse her of it. With plenty of work before me I sat down, wondering over it what the coming days were about to bring forth.

Uncle Stephen and George dined with us every day, and both spoke of my grandfather and Aunt Betsy: of the one as daily recovering strength, of the other as being hopelessly stricken. On one occasion, when Mrs. Ratcliffe was out, I spoke to them of James Graham.

In the midst of many overwhelming troubles of my own I had neglected to answer a letter from Mr. Smithson, and to the one I had written from Mrs. Ratcliffe's house I had received no answer. The actor did not remain long in one place, and my late communication had doubtless missed him. Time had not weakened nor trouble diminished my affection for the dear boy, or my anxiety about him. In this interval of quiet both came back to me more powerfully than ever. I spoke to these two of my first meeting with him, of our brief intercourse and sudden parting.

"God bless my soul!" said George, in the midst of my narrative. I glanced at him as he sat with his hands clasped and his mouth open. This seemed only to be an expression of the feeling of which he was capable, and I went on.

"Margaret," he said, interrupting me again, —"may I call you Margaret?"

"To be sure," I said.

"Then, I think, Margaret," he continued, "I think I can tell you something of that boy; I think I have seen him; I think (now don't you fret), I think he is dead!"

I had my work in my hands, but I dropped it, and raised and clasped them. "Bless God!" I said involuntarily.

Involuntarily, for I had no great trust in God, but something within my spirit compelled me to feel that it was better so than that the child should still be lost in this world.

"I'm glad you take it so," said George. "I'll tell you all I know about it. Mrs. Elliott was one day out shopping, and she had a parcel to carry home. Just such a little curly-headed handsome fellow as you describe asked if he might carry it for her. She had children of her own, and, as she afterwards said, she was unable to resist his appealing look, he seemed to be so pretty and intelligent, and so forlorn. She took him home with her, and gave him food, and kept him with her own children till Elliott came in. He questioned him, and learned from his replies that he was quite destitute—out in the world on his own account, to get a living as he could. He said his father was dead, but begged they would not question him further about his family, as he could

not say anything more. And they did not trouble him with questions, but kept him all night, and the next morning Elliott took him to the office and employed him in going errands, and I've heard him speak of the little fellow as a marvel of intelligence, and docility, and gratitude. One morning he did not come to the office as usual. Elliott made inquiries after him, and found that he had been seized with scarlatina, and conveyed to the workhouse. It was in the workhouse that I first saw him, for Elliott took me with him; but he was then delirious. I afterwards saw him die. He repeated all the names that you have mentioned over and over again: Margaret and Mary, Lilly and Ellen. Margaret, he said, would tell mamma all about him; and towards the last he said an old man with white hair was beckoning him up to God."

I wept as I never had done before, and never have done since. Real, bitter, heart-wringing grief mine was; for, besides loving the boy as I did, there was something in his spirit kindred to mine that held us two together in the eternal tie that may not be broken, and that can only be a protracted agony to them whose trust is not strong in the Lord. I vainly wished that I had seen him once more—that I had been with him when he died.

Uncle Stephen, who had been walking about the floor, and making attempts to clear his throat, came to a dead stand.

"Now let us have done with this," he said. "If you live to be old, Margaret, you may recall this circumstance as a tender memory of the past, but at present you have no time to waste in lamentations that are altogether idle. You say you wish to see your aunt again—now the fact is, Margaret, she has had another stroke, and is so near her end, besides being quite unconscious of everything, that I think your going quite useless. I expect to hear that she is dead, and a very happy release death would be for herself. We shall still have enough to do and think about in the world. Your grandfather has got an idea in his head that nothing I can say will drive out of it. He is determined to return to ——"

"To ——!" I said, now thoroughly roused; "what will he do there?"

"His purpose is to see his brother. He thinks it right that they two, who have not exchanged a word together for nearly thirty years, should meet once before they are called away from earth, and, if possible, speak words of forgiveness and peace to one another. He hopes, too, that, in consideration of his infirmity and sufferings, and the destitution he has himself no help for,

David will, out of his abundance, allow him a small annuity to supply his own few wants. It is only right that they should meet: they are brothers, and there should be peace between them: but David, the sole aggressor, is about as likely to attend to these petitions, especially the latter, as I am to fly. I have, however, said nothing to dissuade Thomas from acting as he thinks fit. This is Friday, and on Tuesday he wishes to set out. I shall accompany him, for I have myself some business to transact at ——, which, as I told you, I quitted for good some months back. At present there can be nothing like order amongst us; you must wait with patience till I can let you know what is to be done."

I had lately importuned him several times on the subject of the useless life I was leading; and I could obtain no more satisfactory reply than this. It seemed expedient to await the result of my grandfather's visit to ——, and to see Aunt Betsy, if so near her end, quietly laid in the earth before I rebelled, as I felt I must, if it became necessary. Uncle Stephen must have been sufficiently acquainted with his sister's character and with mine to understand how both were punished by this juxtaposition.

My grandfather wished to see me, and I went

to him. Uncle Stephen, who accompanied me, walked in the garden with Jem while we conversed together.

"You have been early taught, my dear child," he said, "that life is a very serious matter, even if only with reference to this brief time, with its troubles and difficulties. You are not a novice in trouble now; you understand that it may be borne, if not overcome. It will not do for either of us to encroach further than we shall be compelled to do upon the generosity of Uncle Stephen."

I assured him of my earnest acquiescence in what he said, and of my determination to seek employment.

"I expect no less from you," he said; "I know you would not be able to endure a life of idleness and dependence, especially on such reckless liberality as Uncle Stephen's. He has been the same man all his life, lavishing what he had upon others and forgetting himself; and it grieves me to the heart that we should be this burden to him, for I know he no longer possesses the means. And the Lord has not lost sight of him, Margaret, though he now resists the teaching of the Lord. He will be remembered for his large heart; he will be gathered into the fold; I know and feel it, and the assurance gives me deep joy!"

My grandfather clasped his hands and looked upward with an expression of calm, holy trust in his eyes. I shrank into myself: how little he knew that I also had gone astray!

"As for you, Margaret," he continued, "you have learned to trust God rather than fear man, and I shall expect you to meet trial boldly. You understand for what I am going yonder. If David's position and mine had been reversed — if he had suddenly become poor and I rich — I should have been more eager to do what I am about to do now; but, as it is, my chief motive may be misconstrued: I may not even be able to obtain an interview with him. In that case, Margaret, and in any case, if he does not consent to help me, so that I may not be a further burden upon Stephen Leath, I shall enter the workhouse at ——, and end my few remaining days in it."

I uttered a cry, and started up. There were already arrows, as of death, piercing my heart: I might have said, "Why should I be stricken any more!" I resisted being beaten down further: I was inclined to say, "This is not the way to bring me back to God!"

My grandfather's distress roused me. I relapsed into a resentful apathy that he mistook for resignation. Under its influence I was enabled to leave him quietly, understanding how we might meet again, if ever.

This was a trouble which I could not impart to so genteel a person as Mrs. Ratcliffe, neither had Uncle Stephen any idea of it, for my grandfather would not subject himself to his remonstrances. On considering the subject calmly, I could but acknowledge that my grandfather was right in the determination he had come to. It remained with myself to make another attempt at turning my acquirements or my industry to account.

And more than ever I distrusted Uncle Stephen's wisdom: my foolish dreams were dissipated, and I despised myself for entertaining them. On the second day after my grandfather and Uncle Stephen's departure to ——, Mrs. Ratcliffe spoke to me of the latter, of his thoughtless liberality and his difficulties.

"You would scarcely believe now, Miss Marples," she said, "from the way in which my brother goes on, that he really has scarcely enough money to keep himself, without encroaching upon the small sum that he secured to me and my son years ago. I do not murmur at his doing that if he really needs it—of course it would be very ungrateful in me if I did—but I know Stephen so well that I should not be surprised if he brought us all to beggary together. He has been taking me to task for not buying you, or leading you to buy for yourself, expensive dresses. I reminded him that your aunt being

so near death, all you could shortly require would be a change of mourning. He had overlooked this fact altogether—and men are in the habit of blinding themselves similarly—but he has more than the ordinary thoughtlessness of his sex. Now I think you must feel that, under any circumstances, you will not require expensive dresses."

This was coming to the subject at once, and in a way that I did not at all dislike. I had reason to believe that Mrs. Ratcliffe spoke nothing but the truth, and I was not in a condition to deal with delusions. I informed her of my determination with regard to myself, which she approved of highly. She also promised to make inquiries, and give me all the assistance in her power towards obtaining a situation, either as governess or as needlewoman in some large establishment; and with this understanding between us we became much better friends.

CHAPTER IV.

On the fourth day after my grandfather's departure, rather late in the evening, George came in hurriedly, and asked if his uncle had been there. Mrs. Ratcliffe had gone out to tea, and I answered him.

"We have not seen anything of him," I said: "has he returned from——?"

"I expect he has," said George. "I waited for him yonder, and as he didn't arrive, I thought he must have come on here. I've missed him—I'll just post back."

"Is my grandfather come, too?"

"No, I think not," said George, who had got outside the door, and seemed in a desperate hurry; "but you'll hear all about it from Uncle Stephen." And he darted off.

At about ten o'clock Mrs. Ratcliffe returned, in high good humour. She had won at cards,

and it was one of her weaknesses to be greatly elated by that kind of success. I told her what George had said, and the news seemed to please her.

"Oh, then, there's no doubt but that David Marples has taken charge of his brother, as it was only his duty to do, so rich as he is," she said. "We shall see my brother in the morning, and hear all about it."

I expected to hear something very different from this; and though I had been prepared for it, I felt a strange sinking of the heart. Presently a loud knock was heard at the door, and Uncle Stephen came in with George.

"My grandfather," I said, "has he returned?"

"No, he hasn't!" said Uncle Stephen. "Here, George, take my coat out with you, and your mother too; I want to talk with Margaret alone."

They went out, and Uncle Stephen sat down beside me. A sickening presentiment of something dreadful came over me; for my grandfather had promised that Uncle Stephen should write to me on the day after their arrival, and he had not done so.

"He is dead!" I said, determined to know the worst at once.

"No, he isn't," he said, "nor likely to die just yet. David Marples is dead: died just when he

had no business, after leading a useless life. That's part of my news."

"Then my grandfather has not seen him?"

"Confound it! yes, he did!" said Uncle Stephen, rising up and walking about, and sitting down again: "that's what I'm coming to. Now don't you break down like a very woman, but collect all your energies, as I'm obliged to do. Your grandfather went to see his brother the day after our arrival, and not meeting with him then, he went again yesterday. He had not been gone an hour when a report reached me that David Marples was dead, and that his brother was accused of murdering him."

I did not utter any cry, but I turned sick and faint. Uncle Stephen went out and returned with a glass of water.

"Now, don't be weak and nonsensical, Margaret," he said; "I've told you the worst, and your grandfather is not in any danger. It's all stuff. David Marples has had an attack of apoplexy before: yesterday he got in a passion, and finished himself off. In falling down he struck his right temple against the fender, and produced a severe contusion. Your grandfather rang the bell violently, and raised his brother's head up as well as he could; for David Marples was twenty stone in weight, and Thomas has not at present much more strength than a fly. They

were found in this state. There was a poker upon the floor, with which the doctors agree that the wound upon the temple might have been produced. Thomas was in great consternation and grief, but he gave a straightforward account of the truth, and people affect not to believe him. Bless my life! in a town where the man's harmless and quiet character is so well known, where his piety is so well known, this is too bad. But who cares so little for piety, on its own account, as your church and chapel-goers? David Marples, with his money, and his blustering importance, and his ostentatious liberality, was the sort of man to be considered a valuable member of society. The society at —— is loud in its lamentations and demands for justice. I spoke out, and got myself insulted. Never mind, when this comes before a jury, the truth must appear. George is going to conduct the defence; and I can tell you that when he feels—and he feels strongly now — he can brighten up and speak like a man."

"And my grandfather is——"

"Well, he's in custody, of course. He begged me to come off at once to you, and I'd a long string of pious exhortations to deliver that I forget, but which you may be able to imagine for yourself. Don't, however, fall into the vulgar error of having no self-dependence. It is almost

an exploded one, and it won't do for you. Just rouse yourself up, and be determined to bear whatever may come. You may rely upon my doing my best."

If any inclination to turn to God in extremity, and acknowledge my helplessness and implore his mercy, had lingered in my heart, it departed from me now. That my grandfather should be allowed to fall into this fearful trouble at the close of a blameless life, and after so much severe suffering, scattered the remaining atoms of my faith, and I stood bare and desolate as a tree whose last leaves have been swept away by the tempest. My heart might be wrung, but I resolved not to be more the slave of circumstances than I could help; I would reserve for future action the strength that I had hitherto lavished in a useless waste of feeling.

My grandfather had begged that I might not be allowed to see him, as an interview could only be productive of additional pain to both. I could scarcely have urged such a request, as I could only undertake the journey at a great cost to Uncle Stephen. George came in the room before his uncle left me, and held out his hand frankly, and promised me he would do his very best. He said he felt confident of success. He had brightened up wonderfully, as his uncle said he could; he who shrank from the apparition of an acquaint-

ance in the street seemed to experience no failure of nerve at the idea of standing before an assembly of men in defence of one whom he considered to be injured.

I passed a sleepless night, for do what I would the tide of a terrible agony swept through my soul. I did not see Mrs. Ratcliffe again till the next morning, and then she had so much the air of a martyr,—was evidently so horrified at having me in the house after what she had heard, shrank from me so perceptibly, and spoke so shortly, that if it had been possible to make me more miserable than I was here was opportunity enough to sink me altogether. But I did not feel inclined to sink in that way. I would neither anticipate the worst, that might never happen, nor suffer myself to feel too keenly the silent but well-expressed contempt and reproach of one whose good opinion would really have been worth very little. For my own comfort as well as hers, however, I determined to rid her of my presence, if possible; and as she had said that a friend of hers promised to make inquiries for me at a large dress-making establishment in Bond Street, I ventured to ask if she had heard anything.

"Really, Miss Marples," she said, with a stare of utter astonishment, "what do you take us for? How can I give you a recommendation under present circumstances, or allow any friend of mine

to interfere in your behalf? I should get myself into pretty disgrace. I assure you I have never been used to anything of this kind."

I had never been used to it either, and that was, perhaps, the reason why it had not occurred to me that, as the granddaughter of a reputed murderer, an unenviable notoriety would mark me out go where I would. This difficulty seemed to set me fast. Fortunately, the assizes were close at hand; and as some one would have to endure my presence in the meantime, I thought the punishment might as well fall upon her as upon any one else.

I, therefore, settled quietly down to my work, and took little notice of her. I wrote to my grandfather, and had difficulty so to word what I said that he should not be shocked by any outburst of the impetuous and bold resentment that I dared to entertain against this decree of Providence, and that I found it hard to keep down. I went to see Aunt Betsy, who still lingered, several times: for Uncle Stephen and George being now busy, and rarely coming to the house, I could go in and out as I chose without exciting any notice.

When I look back upon those dark days I wonder how, having nothing better than my own strength of endurance to trust in, I got through them so well as I did. As the day of trial approached I felt it hard that I might not be allowed

to be near my grandfather, and I said so to Uncle Stephen, but he called the wish foolish, and I knew that he was going to great expense and did not need to be burdened with more. I read an account of the supposed murder in a newspaper that came to the house, and the statements made respecting my grandfather astonished me, and staggered my faith in his acquittal. It was currently reported that Mr. David Marples had been compelled to discountenance his brother, on account of the disgraceful conduct of the latter's children, and in which he had encouraged them. Now, as my grandfather's children had all died in their infancy, except my mother, who was herself little more than a child when she died, I could not help wondering if "the children" meant herself and me, and if the disgrace, which we had small part in bringing about, was to this extent intolerable to an immaculate world. My heart burned with indignation, while my face flushed and my head bowed under this shame. I had intended to be very courageous; I had resolved to preserve my self-respect in the midst of depreciation: but my courage and my equanimity were severely tried when I came in close contact with the world and its opinion.

I never knew more of my grandfather's trial than what was told me by Uncle Stephen. He was found guilty, but was respited, and finally

sentenced to transportation for life. I passed a long interval of unconsciousness, during which I was additionally burdensome to Mrs. Ratcliffe, and a convict-ship being about to sail to Australia, I only recovered in time to be carried, like a child, to take leave of my grandfather. If I had had any remaining faith in saints and martyrs I might have looked upon him — so meek, so uncomplaining, so steadfast in his strong trust — as being both; but as it was I only regarded him as one hardly used by a godless world, and vainly dear to myself; and my heart bled inwardly, and I relapsed, and lay for a long time between life and death.

Uncle Stephen had provided me with a nurse, and I seldom saw anything of Mrs. Ratcliffe. When I was at length well enough to go down stairs she would not remain in the same room with me. This, to do her justice, was not any horror of me individually, but rather her way of expressing disapprobation of Uncle Stephen's liberality, to the detriment of his own relations. He was compelled to notice conduct so marked that it could not escape my observation, and one evening he launched out against her in a manner that only heightened my distress.

"Confound the woman!" he said, after telling me not to mind her, "she goes to church twice on Sunday, and I don't know how many times in the

course of the week, and yet she has never learned that it is expedient to show a little of what is styled Christian mercy! I've been wondering for years what people go to churches and chapels for. Your grandfather's last request to me was, that I would not attempt to undermine your religious principles. I told him that you had strong common sense, and that in the matter of faith you would be sure to judge for yourself. My God! haven't you seen what Christians are? If you meet with a man who is a man, or a woman who is a woman, and nothing more, you may find something human about them; but the quibbles and quirks, the hypocrisy and meanness, and heartlessness, and treachery, and sordidness of pious people, floor me altogether. It was chiefly the pious people of —— that floored your grandfather. The sneaking, pitiful hounds, took part with wealth and power; and when I tried to get up a petition in his behalf, they refused to sign because the dean refused. They pretend to act under spiritual guidance!"

"And you asked the dean to sign?"

"I did. It was gall and wormwood to me, but I asked him. I would have seen him hanged before I would have asked him a favour under any other circumstances—I was driven to it, Margaret!" (He had been walking about the room, and he now stopped and struck his clenched

hand upon the table.) "If your grandfather had not been tried by a jury of Christians he would now be free; for they do not judge as betwixt man and man, but according to the distinctions that every form of religion has tended to introduce, until we have become a mass of corruption altogether."

"Uncle Stephen," I said (I was still weak, and was more fitted to receive the gentle ministrations of one of my own sex, than to enter into any contest with him or the world), "let us speak of other matters. I shall soon be strong enough to do something for myself, and you know that I cannot remain here. I am placed under the ban of a double disgrace, and I must deal with the world as I find it. Cannot I change my name, and try again to earn what will keep myself? You once spoke of some plan for me, Uncle Stephen: what was it?"

"Don't drive me mad!" he said; "you see I am half mad already. Before you were born, Margaret, when I saw how my friend and his child were wronged, I vowed to devote what energy was in me to redressing them, if possible. I had a burning desire for revenge upon Colonel Leigh that has never left me, and that could not have been stronger if Alice had been my own child. This feeling made me take to educating you. I determined that you should rise in the

world, in spite of the dean and his clique. I found you apt and intelligent, and as you grew up I saw that you would be beautiful. All this favoured the plans I had for you. In short, Margaret, I considered it would be an easy matter to find for you a husband,—wealthy, if not high in rank—and so secure for you position and protection at once. In London I had opportunities for getting you out in good society. Well, this was my scheme: to get you married before you had seen and suffered enough to make the knowledge of your position of itself an intolerable burthen. Your grandfather frustrated this design for a time—in one respect he defeated my purpose altogether: you have suffered to an extent that has roused all the energies of your character before you have yet made a step in advance towards securing the power, without which you can only suffer on. All the powers of this world seem to be against me; here I am again foiled by this most unhappy affair of your grandfather's. But never mind: we are compelled to bear the life that is given us —we have a right to make it as tolerable as possible to ourselves. In a little time we shall see."

Uncle Stephen's scheme would, at any time, have been an impracticable one for me, though even yet he did not seem inclined to give it up. As

he said, I had suffered to an extent that had roused all the energies of my character; I was too independent and self-willed to yield to dictation in matters of importance; and I, too, saw the necessity of trying to make a life like mine as tolerable to myself as was possible. There was nothing in that life that I would share with another: its difficulty, and sorrow, and shame, above which I could rise in my solitude, with a proud consciousness that I and all of mine had preserved our integrity and borne ourselves bravely, would only have been so many waves to overwhelm me, if I had sordidly attempted to barter them for position or wealth. It seemed so clear that I could only stand alone, that I could not help marvelling at Uncle Stephen's want of common foresight in thinking otherwise. Thus much of good had come out of evil, that present circumstances had rendered contention with him unnecessary.

"Just now, Uncle Stephen," I said, "I must think of the means of existence. I neither can nor will remain a burthen upon you. I would rather at present enter some dress-making or millinery establishment, for there I could at least earn enough to keep myself, which is more than I could well hope for in going out again as a governess; and there would be less inquiry into

my connexions. Do you think you could procure me a situation of this kind?"

"There is time enough to think about that," said Uncle Stephen. "At present you are not well enough to do anything; you must keep quiet."

"I am well enough to work now," I said; "I cannot, I will not remain here. I shall never be any better while I stop here. I require some rest of mind as well as body, and I cannot rest in this state of dependence."

"You are uncomfortable enough, I know," said Uncle Stephen. "What can I say to this woman, with whose follies I have borne all my life, and whose principles I don't understand? Save me from any useless contention with her, Margaret, by keeping quiet till I have time to look about me."

I dreaded nothing so much as any contention between these two on my account. If I had been strong enough to do so, I should have looked out for myself at once; and situated as I was, I would willingly have taken the burthen and the disgrace of my presence from all of them, if possible. For a disgrace as well as a burthen I was to Uncle Stephen, too, though he would not acknowledge it. It was laying a hard task upon him, even asking him to procure me a place. I

was aware of all this, and the thoughts that burned within me kept my bodily strength down. I had busy though as yet shapeless schemes for the future, that kept my brain in a constant state of activity; I resolved by some method or other to get the means of rejoining my grandfather, for the thought of our eternal separation upon earth, under such circumstances, was more than I could endure. Surely I had not been endowed with a bold spirit for no purpose, nor was I uselessly haunted with a conviction that I must go on at any risk towards something yet to be attained, whatever difficulty lay in my path! I felt as one who has lost his way in the dark, and feels conscious that a glimmer of light would enable him to reach the end of his journey in safety. I waited for one step forward in a fever of impatient hope.

I had seen little of George since his journey to ——, the county town where my grandfather was tried, for his sympathy was of the intense kind that distresses to the extent of embarrassing expression, and he rather shunned me; but I thought more highly of him than ever, for many reasons. Uncle Stephen had given me an account of his eloquent appeal on my grandfather's behalf, which had obtained for him the commendation and notice of men high in the profession, and which, doubtless, had its weight in procuring

a commutation of the sentence. I began to love him as a brother, not only because I felt that I owed him a debt of gratitude, but because I believed there was much that was noble in his nature; and I was grieved that there was so much on every side to interdict a free communication between us.

I had not seen Aunt Betsy since my grandfather's trial. From Uncle Stephen, who visited her frequently, I learned that she remained in the same state, and now that I was strong enough to go out, I determined to see her. I was sitting one day, expecting Uncle Stephen to come in, when George entered in evident agitation.

"Miss Marples—Margaret," he said, "are you alone in the house? is my mother gone out?"

She had gone out, as she frequently did.

"Uncle Stephen sent me," continued George, hurriedly. "He thought your firmness and gentleness would effect some good in the midst of the great distress for which we would enlist your sympathy. Will you at once accompany me on an errand of mercy? I will explain to you further on the way."

I expressed my willingness to go with him, and after hastily putting on a bonnet and shawl I accompanied him to a coach that stood at the door. As we were driven along, he told me that his friend Elliott had that morning shot himself,

and that his widow and children were as yet in too great distress to consider that they were left destitute. If any one should be inclined to think it extraordinary that I, in my brief career, should have witnessed so much human suffering and calamity, I can only say, that any one placed as I was, favourably for such acquaintance with misfortune, may see enough of it from day to day, merrily and complacently as the world seems to go on for them that know no more of the struggles and trials of poverty than is furnished by newspaper paragraphs. It would have been odd if anything better had met my view under the circumstances in which I was placed. As regarded myself, I had been singularly fortunate in meeting with kindness. I had not suffered the worst extremity of distress.

The Elliotts occupied apartments in a street near Manchester Square. George led me into a room where I found Uncle Stephen and Jem surrounded by six children, the eldest a boy of about ten, all except the baby crying bitterly. Jem held the baby upon his knee. I had not seen him since my late heavy trial, but Uncle Stephen had told me that his grief had been immoderate. I approached him and held my hand out.

"Oh, Miss Margaret," said the poor fellow, bursting into tears, "I can't get life out of nothin'

nohow now, though there's life enough to be had, too. Somehow it all goes wrong."

I took the baby from him, and understood from Uncle Stephen that the landlady was up stairs with Mrs. Elliott, and that the dead man lay in the next room to us. I shuddered at the sight of a long towel, very much saturated with blood, lying upon a chair. George took it up and went out with it, and presently returned.

"I sent for you, Margaret," said Uncle Stephen, "knowing that you would feel for these poor children, and that you would help us as far as you could. You are scarcely in a condition to be taxed so heavily, but you see we are at our wit's end in this case. The Elliotts, like many others who have been reduced in the world, and then kept down, have no friends. Christianity provides nothing better than a workhouse for desolation like this, and we wish to keep away from it, if possible. George and I are going to look over poor Elliott's papers, and see how his affairs stand; but they must be desperate. He has a brother in the country well off: but, bah! we all know what brothers generally are when poverty stands in the way. I know old Reece, Elliott's governor, for whom he has slaved these twelve years, and I'll see what can be made of *him*. Have you any money left, Margaret?"

I drew from my pocket the purse he had for-

merly given me. I had spent only a small portion of its contents, and I had since wished to return it to him, but he would not take it.

"Make use of it for anything that is wanted here, Margaret," he said, "for just now I am out of money, but I expect to get some in a few days. This is altogether very distressing, Margaret. Elliott's eldest child, a poor, pale, overtasked girl of fourteen, is a sewer in one of the great fiddle-faddle establishments that you want to enter. At present she knows nothing of this misery, and we think it best to let her alone till she comes home at night. Can you stop here all night?"

I said I would.

"That's right," he said. "As to me, I'm not of much use, for I waste half my time in considering what had best be done first. Confound it! I seem to have been born for no purpose but to be a plague to myself, for as to any real good I ever did, with all my striving, where is it?"

Baby had taken a fancy to my curls, and pulling them so as to draw my head aside, I caught a glimpse of George with his arms round the eldest boy, who lay sobbing upon his shoulder.

"Come, Harry, my boy," he said, "this will never do. You must be a man for your mother's sake. Little Frank there bears up better than you do."

The boy turned his swollen eyes in the direction of little Frank, who was seated on a low stool before a chair, on which his arms rested, and his face was buried in them. I fancied he had wept himself to sleep.

"Come, George," said Uncle Stephen, "we mustn't waste time now; let us see what can be done." And the two went out into the other room.

Jem had got two of the little girls upon his knees, and was trying to amuse them. I called to the third to come and kiss baby, who jumped in my arms and seemed inclined to be very happy. As to Harry, who sat helplessly in the chair where George had left him, leaning against the back of it with his hand across his eyes, I did not so well know how to deal with him. Perhaps he knew better than myself to whom to flee for consolation.

It was late in a September afternoon, and the shadows were deepening round me, when a hurried step was heard upon the stairs, and the door was burst open, giving entrance to a very slender, pale young girl, who held in her hands a large wicker basket lined with oil-cloth, which she flung upon the floor before running up to the boy Harry.

"Oh, Harry," she exclaimed, throwing her arms round his neck, "tell me it isn't true what

I have just heard down stairs—tell me it isn't true, or I shall die!"

The boy's grief was roused afresh, and he only replied by sobbing convulsively. I beckoned to Jem to take the baby, for I thought the girl would faint. I went up to her and threw my arms round her, and for several minutes she reeled about, wringing her hands, and neither weeping nor saying anything. At length she burst into a passionate fit of weeping. What she said, and how the children began weeping afresh, and how poor Harry's frame shook as if the soul would burst out of it, I cannot take upon me to relate. When she at length became calmer she glanced at the basket.

"What shall I do?" she exclaimed. "I feel as if I could not take this now. I ran nearly all the way, that I might have time to call here for a minute and see how you all were. I did not expect ——." Here her grief burst out afresh.

"Can I take this anywhere for you?" I asked.

"Will you be so good?" she said, looking up to me. "It is a dress for Miss Wilson in Portman Square. We sat up all night with that and others. O God! I have not seen my dear, dear father, since yesterday morning!"

If I had not held her up she would have fallen to the floor. She was a slight burden, but I was myself still weak, and we staggered together. I

got her to tell me the number of the house; and telling Jem I should be back presently, I went out with the basket.

By inquiring, I easily found my way to Portman Square. When I was admitted into the house a lady's-maid hurried to me, and desired me to follow her up stairs with the basket, saying as we went that Madame Campan ought to be ashamed of herself for not sending the dress sooner. In an upper passage she took the basket from me and told me to wait, with the additional information that she expected I should catch it nicely.

I had not waited long when the maid re-appeared, and told me to walk forward. I heard as I went along a confused sound of angry voices, that assailed me altogether when I entered a dressing-room, in which I found the lady of the house and her two daughters. One of the young ladies had the dress I had brought on; and besides being too tight in the waist it was deficient in some kind of trimming, that the three directed my attention to at once, expecting that I knew all about it.

"Whatever have you people been thinking about to treat us in this way?" said the lady of the house. "It is perfectly scandalous, and you knew the dress was wanted to-night."

"I'm sure I hate the sight of it; I could tear

it all to pieces!" said the chief sufferer, giving a savage pull at the dress that seemed to me a very superb one. "I'll not wear it! I can't wear it! and I'm to be kept at home all through those dirty wretches!"

"Don't worry yourself so, dear," said the mother; "I'll never patronise that Madame Campan again, you may depend upon it. I always thought she kept an idle, dressy set of young women, that didn't know their place or care what they did. What hand have *you* had in this work?"

"Why don't you speak, you great fool?" said the other young lady, enforcing the appeal to myself that at the moment I was too much confused to answer; "can't you open your mouth?"

O ye pampered and soft-spoken daughters of the rich! how many amongst you are capable of thus opening *your* mouths to an inferior, before whom you can make the exhibition with impunity?

I suggested that I could soon remedy the defect of fitting, and in my zeal I ventured to touch the dress which the young lady had not taken off.

"Don't come near me, you nasty, impudent thing!" she said, recoiling in horror; "go and stand by the door, do!"

"Who taught you to take such liberties with ladies?" screamed the mother, growing redder in

the face. "I'll call Madame Campan to account for this!"

"Oh, they're all a lazy, impudent set!" said the other young lady, throwing herself into an easy chair, and yawning.

"Take the dress off, love, and let that person run back with it," said the mother. "There's three hours to spare, and they must bring it back in one. Mind that!" she said to me.

This was a poor opportunity for bringing in the trouble of the young girl whose place I had taken; but after listening for several minutes to explanations about trimmings that only puzzled me, I confessed that I did not understand,—that I did not belong to Madame Campan's establishment, and I mentioned the affliction that had detained the proper messenger by the way.

"And that's the way we're treated!" said the young lady, actually bursting into tears; "we've to put up with anything because vulgar people must attend to their own troubles!"

"Why didn't you say that at first?" said the elder lady. "Get out of the house, and don't show your face here again! Watson, see her out, and take the dress to Madame Campan's yourself."

The maid seemed to be quite as much put out of her way as her mistresses, and she continued railing at me as she drove me before her. I am

not sure that I did not send something like an anathema back upon the house as I walked out of it.

Thus far and no farther extended my experience of you, O women of England! It may be said that I met with extreme examples of meanness, and arrogance, and heartlessness; but while the wealthy are allowed to rise in self-defence, let the voices of faded girls and squalid women be for once heard in reply, from crowded workrooms or cheerless garrets, or from wherever they may be allowed to congregate as machines set apart for hard use; not recognisable as human, except in their scantily-rewarded toil; not thought of in their wants, that make life a daily death; not cared for in the spiritual degeneration, for which there is no help!

The fire that was ready lighted in my spirit was fed by what I had just seen and heard, till it blazed up into a fierce flame. I was already familiar with this system, which produces tyrants and slaves of the worst description; but the contempt and insolence expressed in the words and looks of those people were more than I could promise myself to take tamely, even though they included seven or nine shillings a-week as it might be, and the privilege of sitting up all night to adorn sumptuous robes for my betters.

I was clearly not fitted for my station; I was unfitted for Christianity, which enjoined upon me humility and forbearance, and patient waiting for the vengeance of God. I could and would protect, if not avenge myself. "I will not remain in this country!" I exclaimed passionately as I walked along; "if there be any spot of earth where the air of freedom may be breathed I will find it out. O cruel and cursed place, in which I and mine have suffered so much wrong and agony! I here trample upon your institutions which you dignify with the names of Religion and Liberty; I laugh to scorn your attempts to beat me down, till I become loathsome to myself! You shall not annihilate my intellect and then deliver me over to the privileged murderers in your madhouses; you shall not drag me into your workhouses, and reduce me to the pauper imbecility that sinks man beneath the level of every brute that walks or crawls! I will not wear my fingers to the bone and heap the dust of death upon my heart daily, for the miserable privilege of sustaining an impoverished and degraded existence! I hate you! Oh, my God! how I hate you all, ye people who claim the admiration of the world!"

I spoke in a high tone, and I felt bold. It mattered not to me that I was poor and ap-

parently helpless; I had all the strength of my indignation, as well as the strength of my youth and native energy, to bear me through.

Before I had reached the abode of the Elliotts I had made up my mind what course to take.

One miserable misgiving lingered with me,—I thought it quite probable that the poor slave, Lucy Elliott, might lose her situation through the wrath that I had helped to kindle in Portman Square. I told her of the dissatisfaction of the great personages upon whom I had called, but she did not seem to heed it then; and Jem was that night despatched to inform Madame Campan on what account she was compelled to absent herself from her work.

In pursuance of the resolution I had taken, I sent Jem to Mrs. Ratcliffe, with a request that she would forward by him whatever belonged to me. As Uncle Stephen seemed to wish me to remain with the Elliotts for the present, I was enabled to do this without exciting any remark. Nothing was clearer, however, than that I had no business there, where I was only adding to the expense and doing little good. Lucy was quite capable of attending to the children, if, as the poor are compelled to do, she put forth all her energy in the midst of heavy grief; and there were women in the house, who seemed to

attend willingly and sympathisingly to Mrs. Elliott.

There was, however, mourning to be made, and I deferred my purpose while there seemed a chance of my being really useful. Late in the evening of the second day (an inquest had then been held and a verdict of temporary insanity returned), Lucy and I were busily at work and all the children, except Harry, were in bed, when Uncle Stephen and George came in. With all his kindness of heart, Uncle Stephen was not the sort of man to mince matters out of a regard for the feelings of those he addressed. This he would have called an unmerciful sort of mercy, and he declared that he left all sorts of prevarication to the Christians. He and George had found poor Elliott's affairs in even a worse condition than they had expected,—there was no money, and he was, for him, deeply in debt. Old Reece, as Uncle Stephen called him, declared that he was himself a creditor, and he would not give a penny towards helping the widow and children. All the hope that remained rested upon the brother that had been written to. Uncle Stephen blurted out these facts without remorse, garnishing them with some severe comments on the injustice and inhumanity of old Reece.

"If the slave-driving curmudgeon," he said, "had paid Elliott a fair salary for what he did—

conducting altogether a business that yielded above two thousand a-year—nothing could have been said. He knew that he had the man in his toils, he knew that his large family compelled him to slave on, and he took advantage of this knowledge to keep him down. He spoke to me of Elliott as he would not have spoken of a dog,—that is the worn-out man's reward. He said a hundred a-year was a princely income, and that those who could not live on it deserved to starve. He is a Methodist, and he occasionally holds forth himself, and in due time he expects to be translated to what he calls 'the kingdom.' Deliver us from a kingdom so peopled! I tell you what, George, I more than ever don't care a fig for the laws, civil and religious, with which we are saddled like so many donkeys. If I met this old Reece in a convenient place, I would no more mind easing him of what I consider to be due to Elliott, than I would mind shooting down a wolf. There is a tale—a legend I'm afraid—of one Robin Hood, a sturdy Saxon, who in the midst of Norman oppression stood boldly up for the poor of his race, and successfully levied contributions on the rich by whom they had been despoiled; and if a like career was possible in these days, in which redress is also needed, I should desire nothing better for myself."

"Uncle Stephen," said George, dryly, "you have a peculiar way of teaching the young idea how to shoot. As your plan is an impracticable one, we must turn to something else. Harry writes well; and he may be got into an office where he can do a little in that way, and run errands. You, Lucy, say that your mother has a rich uncle somewhere: what's his name?"

"Bontoft," said Lucy.

"What!" said Uncle Stephen, "the Bontoft of the firm of Bontoft and Greaves, City merchants? I knew them years ago,—both men of immense wealth."

Lucy said it was the same.

"Why, Margaret," he said, turning to me, "that's the fellow you met with. Do you think anything could be made of him?"

"I'm afraid not," I said. "He has a great dislike to the sight and sound of misery; indeed he won't believe that there is any real suffering or want in the world."

"A common complaint," said Uncle Stephen; "I wish I had the curing of it! We'll try him, however. I'll go to him myself: give me his address."

Being furnished with this, Uncle Stephen and George left us; and Lucy and I continued our labours through the night.

CHAPTER V.

Poor Elliott was buried decently, Uncle Stephen, George, and Henry attending him to the grave. The brother of the dead man acted well—perhaps to the best of his ability. He sent fifty pounds, and proffered to take two of the children under his charge. Nothing, however, could be made of Mr. Bontoft. There seemed to be a fair chance of the family being provided for, as George took entire charge of Henry, and Uncle Stephen proposed to establish the widow in some small way of business.

There was no pretext for my remaining any longer with the Elliotts, and I would not return to Mrs. Ratcliffe's. The members of this family all interested me greatly; and they rewarded my slight services with an excess of grateful attachment that pained me, knowing how soon and

suddenly I should be separated from them, probably to meet no more in this world. On the day following the funeral I went out early, telling Lucy I should soon return. During the time I resided with the Bontofts I had heard Colonel Leigh spoken of, and understood that he lived with an uncle, a General Leigh, in Berkeley Street. I had at the time no thought of storing up the address with the view of making any future use of it; but now, when I had tried my best, and saw nothing but failures or impossibilities on every side,—now, when I had become resolute to leave these and try my fortune elsewhere, and cease to be a burden upon one whose generosity had been sufficiently tasked, I thought I had a right to ask that man's help; and I nerved myself to the undertaking.

And, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, it did not require much nerve in me to do this. The great difficulty was, overcoming my strong disgust. I cared nothing for the wealth or rank of Colonel Leigh; my religious education had done me the service of levelling worldly distinctions, so that I cared nothing for power unaccompanied by such worth and honour as my own soul compelled me to look for in those who commanded my respect. I had attempted to write, but could find no words that would satisfy me;

for I did not intend to supplicate or reproach, and I felt it was best that we should meet face to face.

I knew the number in Berkeley Street, and I knocked boldly at the door. A porter opened it, who seemed half asleep; I saw in the hall the leathern chair from which he had just risen. I asked if Colonel Leigh was at home.

"Don't know," said the man, looking at me from head to foot. "What's your message?"

"I want to see him on particular business, which I cannot explain to you," I said. "Will you inquire for me if he is at home?"

The porter again surveyed me in a very leisurely manner; then he told me to walk in, and he would inquire.

While I stood upon the door-mat he rang a bell, and presently a man having the appearance of a valet came down stairs. The porter mentioned my errand, and asked if his master was at home.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said the valet; "I don't think he is. You'd better leave your name and call again."

"I have no time to call again," I said; for I had seen this kind of prevarication at Mrs. Wilton's and at the Bontofts', and I felt sure that Colonel Leigh was in the house. "If you are not sure that he is out, you can at least inquire."

"What name did you say?" said the valet; and turning his face towards the porter, I saw him put his tongue in his cheek. His cool impudence and leering look brought forcibly back to me the heartless horror that had preceded my birth. I felt sick with disgust. There was still nothing to dismay me further; but that loathing—how was I to overcome it?

"I did not mention any name," I said; "and I have no name to give. Tell Colonel Leigh that I wish to speak with him on a matter of life or death—that I *must* speak with him."

Perhaps my flashing eyes had some mesmeric power upon the man, for he bowed rather politely and left me. The porter sank in his chair and commenced reading a newspaper. I had been standing at least ten minutes when the valet reappeared and told me to walk up stairs. I followed him into a narrow gallery with doors on either side. A very erect and portly gentleman in a dressing-gown, who seemed to be upwards of sixty, honoured me with a fixed stare as he walked out of the room, into which I was immediately ushered. There was a breakfast equipage upon the centre table, and Colonel Leigh, also in a dressing-gown, was seated with his slippered feet upon the fender. He rose as I entered, and, to my relief, I heard the door close behind me.

"The devil!" he exclaimed, after looking at me for a second.

"You cannot shrink from me more than I do from you," I said; "and it is in your power to make our conference very brief. I wish to leave this country, to which, if possible, I will never return. If I could have procured the means of doing this by my own labour I should not have troubled you; I already owe a large debt to one on whose generosity I will encroach no further. I want twenty pounds: will you supply me with this sum? In return I promise, that if I can help it, you shall never see or hear of me again."

"Well, but—aw—it's an infernal bore! What you say about not being able to earn money is all stuff, if you choose to work," said Colonel Leigh, lounging over the fire and tossing his slipper from his foot and catching it. "There's plenty to do in England, and you'll be no better off in any other country, if you're not industrious."

"I have not found work plentiful in England," I said; "at least not such work as I can or will do."

"That's it!" said Colonel Leigh; "just what I'm told is the case all over the country. The English workpeople are too well fed and get saucy. I have it upon good authority, from gentlemen who make a business of inquiring into such matters, that there never was a time when work of all kinds was more plentiful or better paid than

just now. It's no use telling me it isn't so, you know; I am in possession of facts."

"I have no inclination to dispute with you," I said. "Will you, or will you not, grant my request?"

"Upon my soul I haven't got twenty pounds about me," said the Colonel; "you might as well try to get blood out of a stone. You must not suppose that I am rich, because you find me pretty decently lodged and attended. This house and everything in it belongs to my uncle. I have been poor all my life, and remain so."

"Then I am to understand that you refuse?"

"I didn't say that: you've a devilish cool manner, wherever you got it. In the course of a short time I may be able to send the money, if you leave me your address."

"I have no address. You speak of an indefinite future, and I have no means of existing in the present. Give me now any sum that will enable me to set my foot on the coast of France."

He had been paring his nails with a penknife; now he turned and looked at me.

"Do you speak French?"

"Yes."

"That's lucky for your present purpose, but it would have been better for you if you had been brought up to regular work. You must understand that you have no legal claim upon me.

However, as far as ten pounds go I suppose I must make an effort. There," he continued. taking two notes from his pocket-book, and holding them out fluttering in his fingers; "I hope you'll make good use of it."

"If you will place them upon the table I will take them," I said. I had a horror of approaching him nearer or touching his hand.

"Oh, very well," he said, with some confusion in his manner, and he threw the notes down. I took them up and was walking out.

"Stop!" he said. "I hope you are leading a ——"

He doubtless intended to say, "I hope you are leading a reputable life," but he thought better of it.

"I hope," he continued, "you will see the necessity there is for exerting yourself. There are hundreds of ways in which a young woman like you might earn an honest living. You are very handsome, too, upon my soul; and if you marry honourably I may ——"

I had stopped without looking back, and now I turned upon him.

"It cannot matter much to you how I live," I said. "Marry I never shall, for I will not bring the disgrace of my connexion with you to any honourable man's hearth. I do not thank you for this help; I should not have thanked you if

it had been given willingly. It will be well for you if, through the future, you can bestow as little thought upon me as I shall do upon you."

I walked out of the room and encountered the same erect, portly gentleman, who met me full in the face, and stared as before. I ran down the stairs, the porter opened the door, and I found myself in the street again. It was still early in the day, and I walked on to Piccadilly, and took an outside place in the Dover coach, that was to proceed to that place the next morning. Then I purchased a small carpet-bag and returned to the Elliotts. I packed up such few things as were most necessary, including my grandfather's Bible, which I prized for his sake. Then I selected a dark merino dress, the only one I could take with me, and such other articles of outward attire as promised to last longest. I had still much to do: I wished to see Aunt Betsy once more, and I had a long letter to write to Uncle Stephen. Lucy Elliott offered to accompany me to the workhouse, and, late in the afternoon, we set out together. The workhouse people had been more civil to me since the appearance of Uncle Stephen; and Aunt Betsy, now quite passive as well as unconscious, could do nothing to provoke harsh treatment. She had changed greatly since I saw her last. All her limbs were now paralysed; her features were distorted, her mouth

twisted to one side, and her open eyes appeared to be fixed. The nurse told us that we did not see the worst of her; that they had been compelled to plaster her back with lime, in order to keep the bones together. All this was horrible to me. Here was none of the peacefulness that I had always associated with the idea of death.

And the soul, the immortal soul, was it sleeping during this prostration of the flesh? Here was no more evidence of its existence than might have been found in a dying dog. I fell on my knees by the bedside, not to pray, but awed by this inexplicable mystery of my own being. I brought Aunt Betsy's life into review before me: her early spirit of independence; her disinterested devotion to her brother in his troubles; her early care of myself, ill requited; her later affection and courage, to which I owed so much. This was her reward at last,—dying as she would least have liked to die — a pauper, make the best of it we could, with only strangers to close her eyes, and unable to recognise those she loved if they might be present with her. I could make nothing more of it than this as I rested my face upon the already dead hand and kissed it with the passionate, but hopeless, affection of earth. As my burning tears trickled through the cold, inanimate fingers, I remembered the uselessness of my grief. I dashed them away with a sort of

disdain, and kissing the distorted mouth, I took a last look and walked out.

I was writing my letter to Uncle Stephen in the evening when he came in. Lucy was up stairs with her mother, whom I had not yet seen, and I was alone. I hurried my papers away and welcomed him: I was really glad to see him once more.

"For an old bachelor," said Uncle Stephen, throwing himself into an arm-chair, "I am about as much bothered as a man can well be who has not a dozen children all going the wrong way. I have just discovered, Margaret, that George is a most undutiful dog."

"I hope not," I said; "I am sure not: you are joking."

"I'm in no humour to joke, for I shouldn't wonder if you, too, turned rusty on my hands. Do you think you owe me any obedience, Margaret?"

This was a startling question, at a moment when I was about to wrench myself away from all authority. I had at no time, however, been more inclined to feel and acknowledge how much I owed to this early friend.

"There must be something very wrong about me if I have led you to entertain a doubt upon the subject," I said; "but, oh, Uncle Stephen, my obedience, like everything else, can only make

me a further burden upon you: I cannot bear this."

"You are a silly child! What do you suppose a fellow like me has to live for, if he has no interest in life beyond himself? If I hadn't you and George to think about, what would become of me? Mind, though, I don't bargain for being plagued in the wrong way. First, with respect to George; the fellow has taken it into his head to fall in love."

This appeared to me a very foolish procedure, considering George's circumstances. I thought he would be better employed if he roused himself out of his lethargic state, and struck out a new path for his exertions, and commenced in earnest the struggle for independence.

"If he is serious," I said, "I hope the lady is rich."

"What a mercenary thought, off-hand! To do you credit, Margaret, you never had much romance about you; how should you, poor child! George has had little to do, except dream, all his life. He has had no real trouble, and a natural indolence has inclined him to take everything easy. Now, however, he is brightening up wonderfully. He has conceived what I call a sublime idea—he wants to go out to Australia."

"Ah! he will see my grandfather!" I exclaimed.

"Of course he will! So will his wife; so shall I: for if he marries and expatriates himself, I shall certainly follow, so soon as I can settle my affairs; taking my sister with me, if she will go; and if not, providing for her here as genteelly as possible. Could you part with us all so, Margaret?"

I had nerved myself up to the parting with them all, but not in this way. It was easier work to wring other hearts than bear this wringing of my own. I wondered if Uncle Stephen could really so leave me.

"What a blank look!" he said, approaching me, and placing his hand upon my head. "Did you think for a moment that we had not included you in our scheme? Why, Margaret, we couldn't live without you, neither George nor I. Look here! what do you call this—a love-ditty? Confound all verse-makers! I'm such a prosaic fellow myself, that if the lines hadn't been addressed 'To Margaret,' I should have been inclined to throw them behind the fire. I found them in George's desk; and upon interrogating him, I learned that he had dared to disobey my injunctions by falling in love with you!"

I glanced at the lines placed in my hand addressed "To Margaret," with a feeling approaching to terror. I could not have chosen George for a husband, even if no such obstacle had stood

in the way as the mental resolve, respecting which I had no wish to speak.

"O Uncle Stephen!" I said, "you cannot wish that *I* should marry George?"

"Can't I?" he said. "Well, I didn't a short time ago, when I thought you might do better; but as matters have turned out, and if you can put up with him—and he's a fine fellow at heart, Margaret—I desire nothing better. He has no energy of his own, except by fits and starts, and you would make a man of him. Your union would reunite us to your grandfather. I don't intend to hold this out to you as a motive, Margaret, because your decision must come from your own heart, and be unbiassed. I only want to prove to you that George has my best wishes. Now, don't screw up your mouth to answer *me*. *I*'m not making love to you. To-morrow George will see you himself, and you can talk it over together. I must bid you good-night, for I have a deal to do, and had no business to be here so long."

"Oh, stop one minute, Uncle Stephen!" I said. (How much harder this had made our parting!) "Everything you say makes me appear to myself a monster of ingratitude, and yet I am not ungrateful; everything you have done for me in the past crowds upon me now, and overwhelms me. I love you dearly, Uncle Stephen; I would

do anything to please you; anything to prove my gratitude and my sense of the duty I owe you; anything that I *could* do! Remember that I have said this; for, oh, it is true!"

"What is the matter with the child?" said uncle Stephen, coming back and taking my hands, which, in my excitement, I had held towards him. "Do you think I should wish you to do anything that you *cannot* do? Come, know me better, and trust me altogether as a friend, the same to-morrow as to-day, happen what will. Compose yourself, now. Bless you! bless you!"

I threw my arms round his neck and returned the warmest caress he had ever given me, and then I found myself alone.

And then I tore up the letter I had commenced, and began another. I wrote to George, too; such a letter as a sister might write to a beloved brother on the eve of an eternal separation: but neither satisfied me; how should they? I had said so much from which so little that I felt could be understood.

I had resisted two strong temptations,—an uninterrupted union with those I loved well, and the prospect of soon meeting with my grandfather. I could not help it. I had no affection to return for that proffered me by George: I was firm in my resolve to battle with life alone. I might only be going to my own destruction; but an

irresistible impulse urged me on, and I felt that it was impossible for me to act otherwise.

I felt that Jem, as well as Aunt Betsy, would be kindly looked to by those I left behind me; and I passed a sleepless night, thinking of them all, though I tried to avoid thought, shrinking from the idea of the distress I was leaving where I would willingly have left peace. I slept with Lucy Elliott, and I did not tell her until we were about to retire for the night that I should have to rise early in order to proceed on a journey. She expressed surprise and regret, but did not question me closely, and I left to her care the letters for Uncle Stephen.

I had one brief doze, from which I started with a sudden exclamation of pain and terror that awoke my companion. I had been dreaming that my heart was rent in twain; that I had it in my hand, and was looking at it; and that its throb, like the beat of a sledge-hammer, shook my whole frame. I awoke with an agonising pain in my heart; for several minutes I fancied I was dying; and then I promised myself, that if I recovered I would never again allow myself to feel with an intensity that, besides doing no good, threatened to defeat all my purposes.

"Be something decided," I said, mentally, apostrophising myself; "either lie down and break your heart in earnest, or bear up with the

true courage without which nothing can be done!"

Against my wish, Lucy rose early to make me some breakfast, and I took leave of her as if only for a short time. She wished to carry my carpet-bag, but I would not let her, and walked out by myself in the grey dawn. I found the coach ready to start, and it was not until I had left London behind me that I breathed freely. When, at half-past two in the afternoon, I found myself on board the steamer that conveyed me away from England altogether, my spirit bounded with exultation in the midst of my regrets.

I remained upon deck all the way. The sea was rough, and there was a high wind. This tumult of the elements was congenial to the mood of my mind. I was not at all sick, and my enjoyment of a scene so novel to me was uninterrupted. In one respect I had won the wild liberty for which I had panted in suffocating rooms, peopled by the pariahs of society—the poor and hard-tasked, the neglected, and despised, and afflicted; abodes approached only by contempt or pauper help; whose monotony was only broken by fresh calamity or death. I was poor as ever, but poverty had ceased to appal me; life was bounding in my heart, and I had high hopes that I should never again be beaten down as I had been; that, however hardly I might be compelled

to labour, I should enjoy some of the privileges of a human being in the land of my adoption.

There were several passengers, and one aristocratic family had a carriage on board. This family, which consisted of an English earl, his two sons, and a daughter, accompanied by several livery servants, valets, and a lady's maid, seemed to attract considerable notice. They remained chiefly upon deck, pacing up and down. As I sat, I could not help noticing the contrast betwixt the eager looks of the plebeians — showing, I thought, in some, a servile adoration that would have well liked to fall down and worship them; in others, a puerile admiration, mixed with much humility; in others, mere passing curiosity—and the evident obliviousness to everything around them in these great ones of the earth. Occupying one seat all the way, I saw enough to make me marvel at the great dearth of self-respect which there is in the world, notwithstanding that every one possessing the power is well enough inclined to make his own importance felt wherever it is convenient to do so. I managed to preserve my equanimity, for great misery is a pervading presence, and a strong resolution will chain the soul, compelling it to the contemplation of the purpose that lies before it. But I could not help thinking how all present would shrink away from me if they knew who and what I really was—the

daughter of one who would not or could not own me; the granddaughter of a convicted murderer; the niece of a pauper dying in a workhouse. I was all this, yet I said, "Thank God that I am nothing worse!—that I do not feel the less fitted for playing an honourable part in the world!"

We arrived in the harbour of Calais. I kept my seat until the bustle occasioned by the departure of the greater people had subsided. When I walked out upon the pier I was assailed by several porters, who wanted to carry my luggage; but I had no particular place to carry it to, and said I did not need their services. A custom-house officer stopped me, took my carpet-bag, and poised it on his finger.

"Parbleu!" he said; "is that all?"

"All."

"Mademoiselle is alone?"

"Yes, alone."

He led me into the Custom-house, and while a woman was searching my carpet-bag I missed my purse, which I had kept in my dress pocket. It contained all I had, except a few shillings lying loosely in the same pocket, and was the remainder of the ten pounds given me by Colonel Leigh. O ye who abound in money, and squander it heedlessly, how can you enter into the feelings that overpowered me when I discovered this great loss? What was I to do, friendless, and in

a strange land, for I knew that money was needed everywhere?

The woman perceived my disorder, and I acquainted her with my misfortune. She advised me to return to the ship, where I might have dropped it, or to give information to the police. I ran back to the ship, and there was a search that produced nothing; then a crowd gathered round me; then I was questioned by the police. The result of it all was that I was left to shift for myself as I could.

For though the police promised to make strict search for my missing property, I had small hope of recovering it, and in the meantime I knew not what to do. An old fishwoman, who had stood listening with a basket of herrings on her head, accosted me as I was walking away.

"Mon Dieu!" she exclaimed, "what will you do, poor child? Where are you going?"

I turned to this voice of sympathy.

"I don't know what to do, or where to go," I said, replying in her own language. "This is a sad misfortune for me."

"Sacristie! come with me, then," said the woman. "Everybody knows me, Mère Meulen! Holy Virgin! we are all Christians, and you're not to be left to want. Come on."

I followed her very willingly, and we entered the town. After passing through a fair, wide

street, she dived into a narrower one, and set her basket down at a door, beside which stood a young man, very jauntily dressed, though evidently of her own class.

"Jaques," she said, addressing him, "carry mademoiselle's luggage up to my room, and see there's a good fire. Where's Petit?"

Jaques put his head down a cellar outside and whistled, and a ragged urchin about twelve years old made his appearance.

"Here, Petit," said mother Meulen, "take this basket to Madeleine, and tell her I sha'n't be out again to-day. Now be quick back, for I want you: do you hear?"

"You speak so loud, mother Meulen, one can't help hearing you," said the boy. "You see if I don't fly."

Mother Meulen laughed. She had taken some of the finest fish out of the basket. She desired me to follow her up stairs. Jaques had preceded us with the carpet-bag, and we found him in a room at the top of the house, where he was busily heaping wood on the fire. Mother Meulen, with great volubility, gave him an account of my misfortune.

"Fi, donc! what a jade Ill-luck is!" he said, turning his handsome face to me. "Never mind, there's worse crosses at sea than that. Perhaps mademoiselle was going further?".

"I intended to have proceeded to Paris," I said.

"You see, Jaques," said my protectress, "we must help mademoiselle."

"True, true," said Jaques; "we must and we will. Sit here, mademoiselle, while I make the coffee. Marie will broil those fish for you, mother Meulen."

"So she will," said mother Meulen, and approaching the inner wall she knocked at it. Presently a brisk, bright-eyed grisette, entered the room.

"Do you want me, mother Meulen?"

"You must broil these fish for us, Marie; you see we have company."

Marie took them and tripped out again, and by the time that mother Meulen had spread a clean cloth upon the table, and furnished it with bread and other requisites, and Jaques had prepared the coffee, she returned with them cooked very delicately; and looking to me (for I was very hungry, notwithstanding my disaster) quite a treat.

The greatest treat of all, greater even than Jaques's coffee, which mother Meulen assured me was superb, was the cheerful faces and lively manners of these three. Poor they were, no doubt, but poverty had not crushed out the gaiety of their hearts; and they possessed true

independence, for there had been no hesitation in any of them about giving up time, or affording other help to myself. Ah, my God! what an important matter half-an-hour of time was to me when I worked for less than sixpence a-day! I wondered what that bright-eyed Marie was, in whose face there seemed to be so much irrepressible glee, and who skipped about as if she were set on wires. She did not look like a vender of fish (no disparagement to mother Meulen—God bless her, wherever she is!), and I ventured to make the inquiry during our repast.

"Marie!" exclaimed Jaques, perhaps not understanding my inquiry; "Marie is the best dancer in Calais. She sings, too, divinely. You should hear her."

"Marie," said mother Meulen, "is a very good girl. She helps to keep her mother, who is an invalid. She is a dressmaker, and her brother is a fisherman, like Jaques there. He's a wild young fellow, and helps others to spoil her. But what's the use of talking when one grows old? When I was young I was as gay as Marie myself. Some of these days she'll marry, and if I had a son I would not wish him a better wife."

I had been thinking that Jaques was her son, but in the course of the evening she undeceived me. Jaques was the betrothed of her daughter,

who lived in service sixteen miles off. They were to be married in a week, and in two days he was to set out to fetch her. In the meantime he seemed inclined to make a holiday of it.

It was very well to make myself comfortable with these hospitable people for a day or night, but I could not remain here; and what was I to do next? Mother Meulen and Jaques wished me to remain till something was heard of my purse; but, though I was sure I had it on board with me, I did not feel any hope of getting it back again. I thought I could not do better than explain how I was circumstanced to these people, and ask their advice. I told them that I was an orphan and alone in the world, and that I had come to France in the hope of obtaining an engagement, as teacher of English, in some school or family.

"There is a convent that is also a school, only three miles from the château where Lisette lives," said Jaques. "Mademoiselle might try there."

"Ah, yes!" said mother Meulen, clapping her hands; "and if she didn't succeed you could bring her back with you."

Jaques was to proceed to Clerons, the name of the village and château, in a light cart, and as Clerons was on the road to Lille, and Lille was on the road to Paris, I thought I could not do better than go with him. Somehow I had no

fear of being left quite destitute in the vicinity of a convent.

Thus, then, it was arranged. I slept two nights in mother Meulen's room, and in the meantime Jaques could gain no tidings of my purse. As I had no intention of returning to Calais, I disabused mother Meulen of the idea that I might return with Jaques.

"Then, *ma foi!* you will take money with you," said mother Meulen, taking a leather purse out of her pocket. "Come, don't be frightened; I haven't been slaving all my life for nothing; I can help my neighbours sometimes: can't I, Marie?"

This was said on the morning just before Jaques and I set off, and Marie was present.

"You can, mother Meulen; and you do. You are a good soul," said Marie, "and you set a good example to us."

"Just hear her!" said mother Meulen; "that's the way she comes over all of us: flattering one, wheedling or tormenting another, till she has it all her own way."

Marie shook her curls, and laughed merrily.

"But mademoiselle must consider," said mother Meulen. "It won't do to travel without money. From Clerons to Paris is a long way."

"But from Clerons to Lille?" I said. "I might find employment at Lille."

"Lille is a fine city, and you might," said mother Meulen; "but you will want money to take you to Lille, and when there you will have to look about you. What nonsense this is! you are only borrowing, and you will pay me again. Haven't I a daughter of my own, and can't I feel for you?"

"Mademoiselle," said Marie, "if you don't oblige mother Meulen, she'll be quite miserable; so shall I, if I'm compelled to think of you far off, and without money. You see how the case stands."

So to oblige them, and myself at the same time, I took sixty francs from mother Meulen,—all I would take, though she pressed more upon me. Then I took an affectionate leave of them, promising to write, and mounted Jaques's light cart — rather a heavy one — and shortly left Calais behind me, and entered the open country of France.

I missed the luxuriance that speaks to the eye in England — the trim meadows and cosey-looking homesteads, the hedge-rows, and groves, and woods that there meet one everywhere. To make up for this—which, however, I did not care about — Jaques was a most entertaining companion, giving me his whole history, which, though very eventless, had much human interest

in it, and pointing out to me every object of attraction on the road. We passed several clusters of houses, and Jaques exchanged hearty greetings with individuals of both sexes, seeming to be well known all along our route. When we arrived at Clerons he put up at a small inn, the landlord of which came out to us. He was a thin, wiry, little man, upwards of sixty, but he addressed himself to me first, with all the politeness of his nation.

"Will mademoiselle allow me to help her? Is this all mademoiselle's luggage? Walk forward! Madame Beton will be quite delighted, I'm sure. Ah, Jaques! what sad havoc thou art about to make at the château yonder! Antoine has had one trial with charcoal — that wouldn't finish him; and now he threatens to shoot himself."

"Nonsense!" said Jaques, laughing. "Mother Meulen's daughter is no coquette, and I understand your jokes. Now, never mind me; I want you to attend to this young lady."

Madame Beton — at least three times as large as her husband — received us at the door; me politely, and Jaques very heartily. I was ushered into a room with a stone floor; and a repast, consisting of fritters, sweet pancakes, very hard cheese, and a light wine, was speedily placed before me.

Jaques remained in an outer room, in which I heard him conversing with the host and hostess. Presently he came to me.

"I'm at mademoiselle's service," he said; "I promised mother Meulen that I would drive you over to the convent as soon as you liked to go. There's plenty of time to look after Lisette."

Plenty of time to look after Lisette! Had he no fear of Antoine before his eyes?

"Ah, Jaques," I said, "you must not neglect your bride; and mother Meulen did not understand that, in the first instance, I wished to write to the superior of the convent. I shall do this to-day, and call to-morrow; so, you see, I need not trouble you,—which, indeed, I should be ashamed to do on such an occasion. Will you return here, and shall I see Lisette?"

"Yes, mademoiselle," said Jaques, "the château is just behind yon hill," and he pointed from the window; "we must pass this road, and Lisette will call to take leave of her old friends. But is mademoiselle sure that I cannot do her this service to-day?"

"Quite sure, Jaques. You shall take my love back to mother Meulen and Marie, and tell them that I now have no fear of getting on. I shall think that you are not very desperately in love, Jaques, if you loiter with me any longer."

Jaques bowed, smiled, coloured a little, and left the room. Presently I saw him walking at a quick pace towards the hill. His errand might almost have been guessed from the buoyancy of his step. Ah! it is a blessed thing to feel that human hearts *may* sometimes be light and happy. I stood looking from the window, forgetting my own troubles, and picturing to myself the meeting of the betrothed lovers.

Madame Beton came in with some fruit, and I took the opportunity of making some inquiries respecting the convent.

"The nuns are of a strict order," said madame Beton, "and they are very poor. They devote themselves to the instruction of young girls, whose poverty prevents them paying for education. It is not the sort of school that would require teachers that have to be paid for. Mademoiselle would succeed better at Lille."

I inquired how it would be possible for me to proceed to Lille.

"This is an out-of-the-way place for conveyances," said madame Beton. "Robert Durand will pass to-night with his waggon, but he only goes as far as Mouscron; but from Mouscron you could easily get on to Lille."

I made up my mind to proceed by this conveyance. Presently Jaques returned, with Lisette. He presented her to me, I thought, with

an air of pride, that increased my surprise at finding her plain, though the expression of her countenance and her manners were very pleasing. He was much handsomer, as a man, than she was as a woman; but the devotion seemed to be chiefly on his side. Hearts are sometimes to be won by qualities that rank far above the ephemeral advantages of mere outside prettiness, and Jaques Rebaud had, doubtless, secured for himself a good wife.

Jaques had evidently been talking about me, for Lisette, in her quiet, respectful way, manifested a strong interest in me and my fortunes.

"But you, Jaques, and mother, to think of our convent for mademoiselle!" she said. "Why, the lady superior herself lives upon black bread, vegetables, and water, all the year round, except on festivals, when they have a little fish. If mademoiselle could only get to Paris!"

I told them that I designed going first to Lille, and then mentioned my intention of proceeding to Mouscron in Robert Durand's waggon.

"How uncomfortable for you!" said Lisette; "he travels in the night, and is so slow. Ah! I remember something—how lucky!"

She went into the outer room, in which stood several boxes. They were her own, and had been sent on before her. She unlocked one, and

brought from it a pillow covered with black leather.

"Monsieur le Baron gave me this," she said; "but I have no use for it. You will find plenty of straw in the waggon, and with the help of this you may be able to sleep."

It was in vain that I resisted taking it; and in the midst of our contention Madame Beton carried it off, saying she would see to its being placed in the waggon herself.

This excess of kindness, to which I had not been accustomed from strangers, touched me even to pain. My poverty and destitution seemed only to increase the respect which they considered due to me. When or where in England had I met with anything like this?

A man and woman, two of Lisette's fellow-servants, had arrived with her and Jaques; and during the short time that she remained at the inn she and Jaques had to divide their attention betwixt these persons, who remained in an outer room, and me. During a moment when we were left alone, Lisette drew out her purse.

"Will mademoiselle oblige me by borrowing a little more?" she said, timidly. "You would make Jaques and me so happy. Mademoiselle does not know how expensive travelling is."

I was resolute about refusing this further help,

but I had a difficulty in restraining my tears. This young girl, her mother, and Jaques, were not at all extraordinary characters: the distribution of the Montyon prizes has made us acquainted with many such.

When the hour of parting came I again commended myself to mother Meulen, and promised to write. Lisette held out her hand, and looked as if she would have liked to kiss me. I threw my arms around her neck, and we both burst into tears. Tears were still blinding my eyes when, after shaking hands with Jaques, I watched them both depart from the window. They frequently looked back and kissed their hands, and I stood till they drove out of sight.

It was early in the month of October, and the weather being very fine I took a stroll in the neighbourhood while it yet remained daylight. There was not much to admire in the scenery if my reflections had not shut it out. Try as I would to fix my attention upon the future, thought, like loose quicksilver, shot in all sorts of directions, and mocked my control. Now I was with the dear, innocent, old man upon the sea. Would he live to reach the place of his destination? would he there be tasked too hardly? would he be allowed to die in that far land, alone and desolate, save for his strong trust in God? Ah! there must be something in the trust that remained

unshaken amid trial like this! Now I was with Aunt Betsy, wondering if she was dead or alive; now with Uncle Stephen and George. I had given them no clue by which they might guess whither I had gone. I had promised to write when I had achieved independence. How long should I have to wait before I could do this?

It was eight o'clock in the evening when the waggon drove up to the door. I heard madame Beton bargaining about my fare to Mouscron, which proved very moderate. Then she came to tell me that I should have some fellow-travellers, who seemed to be very merry. Indeed, I had already heard the strains of a fiddle proceeding from the waggon, and I was somewhat alarmed about the company I should fall into.

"It's only José the Savoyard," said madame Beton. "He's a gipsy, to be sure, but he's a harmless, good-natured fellow; and there's two women with him, gipsies too: you'll find them quite respectful, mademoiselle."

I did not hesitate any longer. Madame Beton said I had nothing to pay; and she placed in my hand a small covered basket, which she said Lisette had brought for me from the château. There was nothing for it but to receive these added obligations complacently; and taking a kind leave of my host and hostess, I mounted the waggon.

There was plenty of straw in it, as Lisette had said. My pillow was placed against a pile of packing-cases, and I was removed a few paces from my three companions, who were revealed to me by the light of a horn lantern swung from the waggon roof. José was seated with his fiddle in his hand. He was quite young, and his countenance had a wild gaiety about it that corroborated the character given me of him by madame Beton. His two companions were young also, and all three possessed the large dark eyes, and glossy black hair, and swarthy complexion of their race. Presently we heard the voice of the driver, Robert Durand, urging the horses forward, and the bells hung at their heads kept monotonous time to their slow onward march.

The gipsies spoke together for some time in a language I did not understand. At length José said:—

"Has mademoiselle any objection to music?"

"Not at all," I said. "Pray don't let me be an interruption to you."

For several miles José went on scraping his fiddle, to the music of which the girls occasionally sang. Their clear voices and wild melodies had a pleasing effect in the still night, and reflection was lulled as I sat listening. At length they began to converse together again; and then one of the girls raised herself up and turned to me.

"Will mademoiselle let me tell her fortune?" she said. "I can see by her face that she is to be fortunate, but I must look at her hand."

"I have no faith in palmistry," I said; "and if I had, I am too poor to pay for a peep into the future."

"Then I'll tell your fortune for nothing," she continued. "Don't you think that we who can look back as well as forward may sometimes find a pleasure in searching into the destinies of those we meet? Come, you have interested me; let me see your hand."

"I have no faith, remember," I said, as I gave my hand.

José unhooked the lantern and held it down as the girl commenced her inspection.

"It is a soft hand to tell of such a hard life," she said. "But the trial is nigh past, and what a future here is! You will rule over many, and will fix an empire in a strange land."

"Then I shall, perhaps, go to Australia, and become queen of the territory," I said to myself.

"What nonsense!" I laughed.

"Ah! you don't believe!" said the girl. "I see that your future husband is waiting for you—wearying for your coming."

"There you prove yourself at fault," I said, snatching my hand away. "There are reasons why I cannot marry if I would."

"Why, mademoiselle cannot be thinking of turning nun? The fates are against such a sacrifice."

"That is true enough," I said. "I have much to do before I shall think of burying myself in a nunnery."

"Good," said the girl. "You are going on and you cannot help it. Remember what I have told you in years to come."

I reclined back upon my pillow. The two girls seemed to compose themselves to sleep, and José nodded as he sat with his arms folded. I lay wondering what I should do when I arrived at Mouscron. It would be so early in the morning that scarcely any one would be up. Seeing at length that the bright eyes of the gipsy girl were fixed upon me, I asked her at what hour she thought I could procure a conveyance to Lille.

"To Lille!" repeated the girl; "are you going to Lille?"

"Who's talking about Lille?" said José, starting up.

"Mademoiselle is going there," said the girl.

"If you don't mind going in our company we'll convey you there free from cost," said José. "You might fare worse, even in a diligence."

This was an offer not to be neglected in the

state of my finances. I accepted it with thanks, and when the waggon stopped got out with my companions. Day had just begun to dawn, and we seemed to be standing in an open road surrounded by waste land. In the distance I thought I saw a clump of trees.

"We don't go on to Mouscron," said José, "for our people lie near here. Now, Morgotte, be nimble-fingered; and, Luce, run and see to lighting the fires."

Morgotte, the girl who had told my fortune, handed our luggage from the waggon, while Luce disappeared. José, having little luggage of his own, carried mine, and in this fashion we set off in the direction taken by Luce.

This was not a very auspicious commencement of a career so brilliant as that which had been predicted for me. That I had associated myself with a thorough band of vagabonds became plain to me, now that I had a full-length view of my companions by daylight. Their ragged but picturesque attire, the wild freedom of their manner and looks, the savageism about them altogether, made me already regret having acted so hastily, and filled me with apprehensions. They might be decoying on purpose to rob, perhaps to murder me. Then I considered what madame Beton had said respecting José, and that there was cer-

tainly nothing like ferocity about him. Finally, a growing inclination for adventure, and the knowledge that I had compromised myself for the present, tended to reconcile me to the course I had taken.

CHAPTER VI.

I ACCOMPANIED José and Morgotte, and at the distance of about half a mile we came upon a large gipsy encampment. The people were all astir, and there seemed to be a swarm of them, men, women, and children. There were two waggons, besides several mules grazing about, and a large tent from which a number of half-naked urchins peeped out. Beside one of the two fires a wrinkled old crone sat smoking a short pipe; Morgotte took me up to her, and introduced me in her own jargon, adding, "Mademoiselle will travel with us to Lille."

The old woman lifted her bleared eyes to take a view of me, and then grunted out something that did not sound very like a welcome. I had never seen anything so hideous in human shape before; besides that, there was something really diabolical in her countenance. The men and the

rest of the women were not at all an improvement upon José and his companions, and I began again to be troubled with misgivings. I was presently called to partake of the contents of two huge iron pots that had been swinging over the fires. I was accommodated with a basin and a spoon, the rest eating out of the pots as they could. This morning repast was a species of soup, composed chiefly of vegetables; but there was a mixture of some kind of meat in it, and it was not at all unpalatable. After breakfast there was a consultation among the men, and then a general saddling of mules; and then, to my disappointment, the men rode off, leaving us behind them. Morgotte and several of her companions also left us,—the former told me, to try their fortunes at Mouscron. She said her people would not remove to Lille till the evening. All the day I amused myself as well as I could with the children and with watching the ways of these wild people. The women who remained employed themselves in washing and hanging out clothes, or in sitting down and mending them. I did not observe any one amongst them to whom the rest paid respect except that hideous old woman, who always seemed to have a pipe in her mouth, and who watched me wherever I moved to. At dinner-time I opened my basket, and found in it a cold

roasted fowl, a loaf of white bread, and a bottle of wine. I asked the others to partake with me, and the old woman, who had her full share of the wine, pronounced it to be very good.

It was growing dusk when we at length mustered together, and set out for Lille. The women and children were mostly packed in the waggons, and José asked me if I could proceed on one of the mules. I had never tried that mode of travelling, but I was willing to venture a good deal to avoid being half suffocated in the waggons. With José at my side, and with Morgotte and others to set me an example, I got on very well; and I was not at all sorry that our march was to take place in the dark. It was cheerless enough when we at length again encamped near Lille; but bright fires were soon blazing round us; the tent was again erected, and a supper similar to the breakfast prepared. Morgotte spread a blanket for her and myself to sit upon; the old crone crouched near us with the pipe in her mouth, and holding her withered hands to the blazing fire. The children had been put to bed, and round the two fires the whole company of men and women had gathered. Both Morgotte and José had informed me that we were close upon Lille, and that I could easily walk there in the morning. Being now free from my apprehen-

sions, and as nothing could be done that night, I was glad to remain where I was, with the knowledge that I should have the day before me.

These wild people, to whom I now owed a debt of gratitude, inspired me with much interest. Wanderers as they were, living and lodging hardly, they seemed to be a sturdy race, and, except in the use of tobacco, there seemed to be no intemperance amongst them, the men chiefly drinking water. To judge from their eager emphasis and wild gesticulations as they spoke, they seemed to have enough of native spirit to sustain them. I wished that they had conversed in a language that I understood. I should have liked to know what were the plans they seemed to be discussing so eagerly; what objects of interest attracted them in this gregarious life; whether they had any wish or hope beyond it. I had, besides, a lurking sympathy with these self-made freemen, who would not be shackled with the conventionalisms of the world.

By the flickering light of the wood fire these wild faces and extended figures became again invested with the romantic picturesqueness that daylight more than half robbed them of. I was thinking that as we sat we might supply material for a grand picture, when José, whom I had missed for some time, approached, tuning his fiddle.

"Room there for M. de Beausset!" he cried; "room for the gipsies' friend!"

There was an instantaneous starting up of men and women.

"Keep your seats, and be hanged to you!" cried M. de Beausset; "why do you startle us in that way, like a flock of frightened geese? Ah, Morgotte! I'll come and sit by you, and you shall tell me my fortune again, for I'm quite losing heart. The world uses me very scurvily, Morgotte."

"That must be your own fault, monsieur," said the girl, by whose side he had thrown himself. "You have youth, health, wealth, and—and you are talented and handsome. It is not such as you that the world is inclined to use so."

"Now what's the use of flattering a fellow, and making him look like a puppy?" said M. de Beausset. "What advantages are there in circumstances that place out of one's reach the true elixir of life? I tell you I'm *ennuied* to death, Morgotte. Am I not compelled to come to you in order to be able to live at all?"

A deep sigh from Morgotte caused me to turn and look at her. She was sitting with her head bent down, beating her fingers together. I caught a glimpse of the very handsome face and elegant figure of M. de Beausset. José struck up a merry tune, to which the younger gipsies, male

and female, commenced a wild but not ungraceful dance. When it was finished, Luce and two or three others danced singly. Morgotte still remained seated beside me.

"How is this, Morgotte?" said the new-comer; "it is unusual to see you seated, and so silent, while the dance is going on. Have you had a quarrel with José?"

The girl started up with a bound. Disappearing for an instant, she returned with a pair of castanets, and keeping time to her own movements, she performed a variety of figures with a rapidity and a wild grace that compelled both attention and admiration. The dancing went on, intermixed with singing; and in the meantime M. de Beausset, in the absence of Morgotte, seemed inclined to address himself to me.

"This is a wild, free life," he said; "does it possess any charms for you?"

"None that are dangerous," I replied. "This is not the sort of freedom I covet."

"You have some sense, I see; though, perhaps, you have not always made good use of it," said M. de Beausset. "Let us converse in your own language; José has told me how you met. You must not be offended at my telling you that the sooner you break off this connexion the better."

"I shall leave these people to-morrow," I said. "I am going to Lille."

"And altogether, how long have you been in France?"

I would much rather not have been questioned by this M. de Beausset, whose curiosity seemed to me impertinent. I was equivocally placed, however, and I considered it due to myself to give some explanation; but I spoke proudly and distantly.

"I arrived at Calais four days ago," I said. "If I had not had the misfortune to lose my purse, I should now be in Paris. Whatever these people may appear in your eyes, I may not forget that I owe them a debt of gratitude."

"Well, that's quite right. But you must by this time be aware, that when young ladies go rambling by themselves, they are liable to get into scrapes. Now I suppose the fact is, there's a hue and cry after you somewhere? If you have any inclination to return to your duty, and so forth, I will gladly advance the funds to take you back to England."

"To England? never!" I said. "I abhor, I detest it!"

"Heyday! you have wrongs to complain of, I see: mighty matters, I should think, for a young girl that has scarcely entered her teens. Did

your governess whip you too severely, or did papa and mamma find your love-letters and lock you up? Come; was it anything worse than this?"

I was annoyed by his perseverance, and by the light, bantering tone, in which he spoke. There was no further explanation that I could give, and I turned from him without answering.

"I didn't mean to offend you or to hurt your feelings," he said, after a minute's pause. "I thought you would not mind taking a little advice from a person so old and experienced as myself," (he was not thirty), "and I might be able to offer you substantial help, if I knew what your intentions were. I have connexions in both Lille and Paris."

M. de Beausset, gay and handsome, and looking much younger than he was, did not strike me as being a very sage or proper counsellor for myself. However, I thought he might be able to give me some information that would be useful to me, and I therefore told him with what purpose I had come to France.

"I have an aunt in Lille, the superior of a convent where boarders are received," said M. de Beausset. "Will you allow me to recommend you to her?"

I was about to thank him very eagerly, when it suddenly occurred to me that the circumstances under which he and I met would tell sadly to my

disadvantage. These ever-recurring obstacles that roused suspicion in others, and in me an impatient disdain, compelled me to act warily.

"I thank you," I said, "but perhaps it would be better if I made personal application."

"And you are fully prepared with credentials, and so forth?"

Ah, my God! the character! It would be needed here as well as elsewhere. I fixed a look of blank dismay upon M. de Beausset.

"Don't be frightened," he said; "you will think better of the past and communicate with your friends. My aunt, though a nun, is quite a motherly sort of person, and it would delight her to be allowed to assure your parents of your safety. Cannot you believe that I am advising you for the best?"

"You are like many other advisers," I said: "you do not understand the subject upon which you are entering so confidently. I have no parents. I have not a single relative in England. I had one friend, upon whose bounty I was a burden. That, and the impossibility of attaining a livelihood in yonder land, determined me to come here."

"Ah! what is it you tell me?" he exclaimed, turning fairly round and looking in my face. "Large tears are trembling in your eyes, tears that are too proud to fall! So young and so deso-

late! Forgive me, for how could I have supposed this?"

I sat gazing in the fire: I saw the necessity for curbing my own emotions, and I did not trust my voice to reply.

"You have trusted me," he said, "and you shall find that I will not abuse your confidence. More than ever you will be welcome to my aunt, whose life is vowed to the succour of the friendless and distressed. Promise me that in the morning you will proceed to her at once. I will prepare her to receive you."

I began to think that I could not do better. I promised I would go, and he gave me the address.

"You are a rank heretic, I suppose?" he said, after a pause.

"I am not a Roman Catholic," I replied; "but I have come amongst them in search of something like Christianity."

"What! did you find a dearth of that commodity in most Christian England, with its hundred sects?"

"I met with few Christians there."

"That's capital! you'll suit sister Magdalene, if only as a convert. It seems hard and unnatural that you should so early have had this bitter experience of life. I'm afraid you'll not meet with many good Christians anywhere. I can con-

fidently recommend you to my aunt, however, and hers is the kind of protection of which you stand in need. I will speak to her the first thing in the morning, and I pray that you will not neglect to go; Morgotte will show you the way."

I again promised and thanked him; and hastily bidding me good-night, and telling José to follow him, M. de Beausset disappeared.

I slept that night in the tent, near Morgotte, but surrounded by several others, women and children. Early in the morning Morgotte roused me, for towards morning I slept heavily.

"I am to go with you to the convent," she said. "M. de Beausset fears to lose sight of you. He told me this, and gave me the order as if I had been a dog!"

There was a singular fierceness in her speech and looks, and her eyes flashed with an expression that made me shrink from her.

"Yet he seems gentle and kind," I said. "But it is me that you will oblige most. I already owe you my thanks, and I will reward you for this service."

"You would give me money after tearing my heart!" she exclaimed, savagely. "Yes, you will reward me,—you have rewarded me already!" and she turned from me with a wild laugh.

I had lost one friend already. Was it possible that this girl loved M. de Beausset, and that she

was jealous of *me?* I could only surmise this. Perhaps M. de Beausset had wronged her; he was rich and powerful, and by such the agonies of the poor are accounted small matters. Well, I had learned this truth, and Morgotte had, at least, nothing to fear from me.

I sought José, and offered to pay him for the services I had received from him and his people, but he refused to take anything.

"We shall lose nothing by entertaining you," he said; "besides, that was not our bargain."

After breakfast Morgotte suddenly appeared before me, carrying my carpet-bag.

"Are you ready?" she asked, sullenly.

I was ready in a few minutes, and I offered to carry my luggage myself.

"Yes!" she said, "and if we meet M. de Beausset he will say, 'Why does not that Egyptian vagabond wait upon mademoiselle, as she ought to do?'"

"*Can* M. de Beausset speak in that way?"

"He can look it," said the girl, fiercely.

We walked on a few paces, and we were close upon the city.

"Morgotte," I said, "you are a woman, and may be true to yourself. Stand up for the honour of your sex, and shun men like this M. de Beausset. Why should you thus care about him?"

"Have I not eyes and ears? Can I not see, and feel, and think like you?" said Morgotte. "Why should *you* care about him?"

"I do not, except as a stranger who seems inclined to help me."

"It is false!"

"What am I to say to you, Morgotte? Do you think I am silly, or mad enough to have fallen in love with this man?"

"It would not be of much use for you," said Morgotte, "for M. de Beausset is engaged to marry. I *know* that he does not love her he is about to wed. I would not have him love any one."

"Not yourself, surely, Morgotte?"

"And why not? Why not me as well as you, or any one else?"

"I fear M. de Beausset is a villain."

"How dare you say that, or think it—you that know nothing of him? He is the very soul of honour. If he said to me this moment, 'Morgotte, I love you!' I would follow him to the end of the earth; but he never did say it—he never will. He laughs with me and at me—he despises me too much!"

I knew not what to say to this girl, so abandoned to a hopeless attachment. We had entered the city, and were traversing the streets. In one of them Morgotte stopped before a door

set in a dead wall. She rang a bell, and presently the wicket was opened by the portress in a nun's habit. When I told her my name and errand,—(I had given the name of Margaret Payne to M. de Beausset),—she gave me admittance. Morgotte had vanished before I could again speak to her.

I was led through a small court-yard into the house, and then through a long corridor, till I was finally ushered into a room, scantily furnished with a table and a few chairs. Upon a small stand stood an ivory crucifix, and over the mantelpiece was a painting representing some saint. This was all the room contained, except a green curtain or screen that covered one entire end of it. It was from behind this that the superior, mother Magdalene, at length made her appearance.

Her figure was tall and stately, and she did not seem to be above forty-five years of age. I was first struck by the extreme placidity of her coun tenance. No emotion seemed ever to have ruffled its calm surface, and her clear, pale complexion, and large blue eyes, were set off becomingly by the flowing dress of black serge, with its ample sleeves, and by the long white veil and scapulary.

"You are welcome, my daughter," she said,

kindly taking my hand. "Sit down beside me. M. de Beausset has been telling me about you, and I have promised him that I will do what I can to help you. You are young to have met with so much trouble in the world; but, alas! the world abounds with trouble. Here, at least, you will find peace for a season."

Her kind manner and gentle voice,—above all, the quiet pity of those passionless eyes,—seemed to stir up from their depths all the old griefs of my life. I took her hands and kissed them, and wept passionately.

"What is to be done with this child?" she said. "Alas! you have wanted discipline, and have yet to learn that these strong emotions are sinful. Compose yourself, and cast these troubles upon Christ, who is able and willing to bear them for you."

"Alas! alas!" I exclaimed, "I have been amongst them that have taken all trust in Christ from me!"

"Ah! sad work!" said mother Magdalene. "Do you not know that Christ is not of the world? If you would seek him, you must come out of it. But have courage; calm yourself, and we'll see what can be done. Do not give way to these passionate feelings. You are not in the world now, but amongst those who are vowed to

God, and who keep down the evil of their natures by mortification. I trust that these examples will be for your good."

I subdued my emotion by a strong effort. I could not help thinking, as mother Magdalene rose and rang a bell, that if mortification was a good specific for keeping down the evil that is within us, I had been pretty well tried already. A very pleasant-faced nun, about thirty years of age, entered.

"Dame Marie Morine," said mother Magdalene, "for the present you shall take charge of this child. You will introduce her to the others, and let her understand the regulations of the house. In the evening I must have a longer conference with her."

I accompanied dame Marie Morine, who took me up into the dormitory. She showed me into a cell-like sleeping-room, in which my carpet-bag was already placed, and told me I might consider it as my own. She was very lively, good-natured, and chatty, and learning that I had never been in a convent before, seemed to take a pleasure in leading me over the place and describing what must be so new to me. These nuns did not belong to a strict order, and the mortification (after that of giving up the world) was chiefly voluntary. In the large, cheerful school-room, to which I was shortly ushered, I found assembled about

twenty pupils, with about as many nuns and a very jovial-looking old priest. Dame Marie Morine introduced me generally to the whole.

"You are welcome, my daughter," said the priest, advancing and extending his hand. "Here is a stubborn little rebel, who says she shall never be able to learn your hard English. I shall turn her over to you,—see what you can make of her."

He went out, after pushing towards me a fair-haired little girl, who laughed very merrily, and told me in French that I should not be able to make anything of her.

"Our English teacher left us some time ago," said dame Marie Morine. "We are negociating for another, and in the meantime, ladies, mother Magdalene desires that none of you will address mademoiselle Margaret except in English." There was much elevating of eye-brows and shrugging of shoulders at this intimation. Seeing how I might best make myself useful, I took up one of the English books and began catechising the scholar more particularly recommended to my charge. Dame Marie Morine formed a regular class for me, and I continued thus employed during some time.

In the evening, when I again saw mother Magdalene, she did not press me on the subject of my personal history, when I told her that the past was as yet too painful for me to speak about.

She made herself acquainted with my acquirements, and, above all, with my disquiet of mind; with the doubts, and distresses, and perplexities that were leading me away from God, instead of drawing me nigh to His presence.

And mother Magdalene undertook the task of leading me back of God. She had already made her own way to my heart, and I yielded myself implicitly into her hands. I cared nothing for mere differences of creed: where I met with the kindness enjoined by Christ, and I had met it here, I could well believe that Christianity most abounded; and it was easy work to make anything of me when the old stumbling-blocks of indifference, and cruelty, and injustice, were moved out of my path. Ah! Protestantism was venal and cold,—a religion without a soul, as mother Magdalene said. What interest could these people have, except a commendable one, in seeking to draw me to their way of thinking? Why were they not indifferent, like my own country-people? Why did they not leave me to perish, soul and body, in the streets?

I had no strong prejudices to combat. My grandfather had called the Reformation glorious, by which the Church of Rome had been overthrown in England; but he had never before me entered upon the theme of its errors. I was guided by my individual experience of the working

of the two systems; and I gave up my whole soul to the Church of Rome, and once more believed that there was a Saviour and a God.

Its institutions, so far as conventual life went, seemed to me replete with the spirit of Christianity. I had seen enough of the world to know that such a refuge as monastic life only affords, must often be a priceless boon to many, who, like myself, either inherit the world's contempt, or shrink from its hard usage, or weary of its heartlessness; and I felt that I might eventually be glad to turn to such a refuge. Battle with the world I first would, bravely; but I should soon have none to struggle for, and I had a long, solitary life before me, and it seemed a consolation to me to know that I might return there to die peacefully.

Ah, Mary! "blessed amongst women," as the angel called thee, how my whole heart turned to thee when, in the first enthusiasm of my new faith, I was taught to supplicate thee as a mother! To me, who had never known a human mother, this idea of a divine one had a peculiar charm. I had many sorrows that I could not reveal to the world, and here was an outlet for all the pent-up grief of my soul. The encouragement of enthusiasm is peculiar to the Church of Rome, and in this one respect I had plenty to work upon: I began to wonder at the dearth of my past spiritual life.

I had been here nearly two months, and had written to mother Meulen, whom I could not yet repay, and had heard in reply that Lisette and Jaques were married and very happy. No news of my grandfather, none of Aunt Betsy, and none of Uncle Stephen or George—no hope of any. What a void in my life! One of the nuns seemed to have a *penchant* for punishing herself. She showed me the horsehair she wore next her skin; the cord that had nearly eaten into her flesh; and I knew that she was in the habit of frequently scourging herself. This mode of subduing the spirit puzzled me exceedingly; all the more because I felt so sure it would do me no good. Sister Clare recommended it to me as a cure for my earthly regrets, and I made her a reply that subjected me to a severe lecture from mother Magdalene and to a penance from the priest.

It was by very slow degrees that the attempt was made to bring me to spiritual obedience. I acknowledged my stubbornness of heart, at the same time that I willingly undertook any task that was enjoined; and I was assured that in a short time I should become sensible of an inward change, that would be gratifying to myself as well as others. All this time I was longing for some *outward* change. My great object being to earn money sufficient to carry me to Australia, I began anxiously to consider the probability of receiving

any remuneration for my services in this place,—a question I could scarcely ask. I had a horror of any appearance of ingratitude; but at the same time I felt sure, that if there was any design to keep me altogether in that place in a state of bodily and spiritual dependence, I should rebel.

I was saved from anything so repugnant to my own feelings by a missive that arrived from Paris. I was called into mother Magdalene's room one morning, and informed that Mademoiselle de Lammenais, the betrothed bride of M. de Beausset, wished to engage me in the capacity of companion.

"Her grandmother," said the superior, "is a most pious woman; and you will not be without good example, though surrounded by many temptations, which you can only escape by frequent communications with your spiritual adviser. The Comtesse de Lammenais has thoughtfully requested that, as you are so young, you might not be sent to Paris alone. Father Dessalle is to proceed there at the end of the week, and you can go under his protection. In the meantime we shall scarcely be able to prepare you. Send dame Marie Morine to me."

I had hitherto worn the single dress in which I had arrived, and now I was assisted by the nuns in making up several new ones. There was always a supply of ready-made linen in the con-

vent, as it formed a part of the work, for which the nuns periodically obtained a ready sale. I was bountifully supplied from this store; and being remunerated so liberally, so far beyond what I had any right to expect, I felt pained, and ashamed at having thought unworthily of those who laboured so earnestly for my temporal as well as spiritual advantage.

It was during the Christmas vacation that these preparations were made for sending me to Paris. I have before said that these nuns were not of a strict order; and the circumstance of the convent being a school also allowed them a large intercourse with the world. I had never observed anything like discontent amongst the professed nuns, but there was one young novitiate who had attracted my observation by her melancholy air and frequent deep sighs; and I wondered if, like me, she had suffered in the world, without, like me, feeling the power and resolution to venture again into the midst of its turmoil.

The day before my departure I was passing through the corridor, when this young girl stopped me in an agitated manner. She asked me to accompany her into the garden for a moment; and I went.

"O my God!" she said, looking anxiously round, "you are going to Paris, and you are

leaving me here to die! My heart is breaking, mademoiselle Marguerite!"

"What trouble have you that you cannot confide to mother Magdalene, who is so gentle and compassionate?" I said.

"*She* compassionate! she is like them all—cruel and inexorable! They are driving me mad! I have wept and entreated—I have knelt and prayed; they know that I have no vocation, yet they insist upon making me a nun. I will die first! There is no help for me in this place, unless you will help me. O Marguerite! you have been a Protestant, if you are not one now: cannot *you* show me a little mercy?"

Protestants turning to Catholics for mercy, and Catholics to Protestants—this was strange work!

"But they will not, surely, force you to be a nun!—they cannot."

"Hush! we shall be overheard and ruined. O my God! do you pity me?"

"I do from my soul, Clémence: show me how I can help you."

"And you would dare to help me?"

"Yes; I would dare anything, if I thought you were being wronged."

"Is it not cruel wrong to shut me up here for life against my will?"

"That must be your parents' fault."

"No: I have no parents—none that I ever knew. I have been told that I am illegitimate: they give me this intelligence, thinking that it will reconcile me to this doom to which they would condemn me. I understand that my parents are living and in the world, and that I must not disgrace them. If they can walk abroad with this sin upon them, why am I to be punished so severely? If they have any hearts, I will yet wring them. I can die by some means: you see, if I chose I could dash my brains out this minute against yonder stone wall. It's all nonsense being compelled to bear a long life of agony: no one need do that."

"Dear Clémence, don't talk so; this is terrible! You asked if I would help you."

"Yes, you might carry me a letter to Paris."

"I will."

"Ah, you are my good angel! But oh! you must be wary! If we are discovered! I have the letter written: I will place it under your pillow the last thing to-night. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"It is ready, addressed to M. Picarde, banker, Chaussée d'Antin, Paris. This gentleman has always paid my board here, and sometimes he has come down to see me. I want to let him

understand the consequences of compelling me to profess."

"And you are not allowed to write to him?"

"Oh no! and I am not to see him again. They tell me that he has now done with me, and that I must wean my thoughts from the world — the world that I have never seen, that I long to enter!"

"And have you lived here all your life, Clémence?"

"Ever since I can remember," she said, sadly.

This was worse than the perfect indifference of Colonel Leigh. How could they be called Christians who brought children into the world to neglect or oppress them thus?

"And this letter, what am I to do with it?"

"Put it in the Paris post whenever you have an opportunity of doing so free of observation. You must not be found out as having helped me, for the world. Do you know what vengeance these people can take if they are thwarted? Do not take it to the post for a whole month at least. Then you will not be suspected."

"And when are you to be professed?"

"Never! They say I shall profess at Midsummer. They shall see!"

There was a bold resoluteness about this young creature, whose violent grief was literally wearing her to a shadow. I was instantly revolted by

this injustice, this cruelty, practised by those to whom I had given credit for so much humanity. O Saviour! that requirest an undivided place in the hearts of thy people, how was I tormented by doubts and perplexities, while as yet I only sought to understand Christianity in the actions of men!

I sewed Clémence's letter into my stays, and my heart was indignantly throbbing against it when mother Magdalene gave me her parting advice, on the night before I set out for Paris. How kind she was! How affectionately she admonished me, as a mother might do! After all, I had to take into consideration the prejudices of her education. She, also, had never been in the world; and she, doubtless, felt justified in even enforcing a way of life that had brought peace to herself.

I took a friendly leave of all the nuns and departed with father Dessalle in the diligence. We travelled all day and night, and arrived in Paris in the morning. The priest hired a vehicle that drove us to the hôtel de Lammenais, in the suburb St. Germain.

We were ushered into a splendid apartment on the first floor, and a very lean and withered, but very dressy woman, whom I instantly suspected to be highly rouged, even at that early hour, came to us.

"Ah, madame Maraude! looking well as ever, I see," said the priest. (Why did he not rather reprove her for this unseemly folly at her time of life?) "How is the comtesse, and the little Emillie?"

"Emillie is charmingly well, but not up yet. Ah, father Dessalle, it's well for the rich and gay, that can keep late hours for their own pleasure: as for me, what with sitting up half the night with madame la Comtesse, who you know is near dying at least once in the twenty-four hours, and attending to other matters in the day, I'm nearly worn out. I'm sure I don't know what is to become of me when I am grown old."

"If that time should ever arrive," said the priest, bowing politely. "I suppose you are prepared to receive this young lady, who was consigned to my charge by mother Magdalene. You will see to her proper accommodation and mention her arrival to mademoiselle Emillie."

"O yes, I expected her," said the waiting-woman. "She is English, I see: I can speak a little English, and I intend to improve myself. But you—you speak French well?"

"Like a Frenchwoman," said the priest, answering for me.

"Ma foi! we shall get on rarely. Will you take coffee, father Dessalle?"

"Mademoiselle Marguerite and I will breakfast

together, if you please. Afterwards I have business with the comtesse."

Father Dessalle, who had been very taciturn during the journey, was now cheerful and talkative. He drew my attention to one of the large windows, commanding a view of the beautiful locality in which the hôtel was situated. Then he pointed out several fine paintings on the walls of the room; then we sat down to coffee, served in Sèvres china with an accompaniment of silver plate.

Father Dessalle gave a friendly greeting to the little powdered-headed footman who waited.

"You are still troubled with your old complaint, I see, Baptiste," (the latter limped a little): "how do you manage it?"

"Sacristie! it's all the fault of M. l'Abbé Roullett," said Baptiste. "He took for me to Rome a nostrum to be blessed by his Holiness; and I once knew the same remedy to perform a perfect cure in a few minutes. But M. l'Abbé forgets me."

"We must stir up his memory," said father Dessalle. "Let me see; I shall be writing to him soon, and I'll mention it."

Baptiste was profuse in his thanks.

What folly was this? It puzzled me.

Father Dessalle left the room, saying he should have the pleasure of seeing me frequently. In-

deed I afterwards learned that he was the Comtesse de Lammenais' confessor. I don't know what it was that made me feel more restless, and unsettled, and unhappy, in that splendid mansion than I had been in the plain, quiet convent. Perhaps it was the thought—and it would come—of how differently my pauper aunt and my convict grandfather were lodged and attended. I could not help feeling in my heart that I should have been much happier if I had been allowed an opportunity of earning what I wanted in a humbler sphere, away from this grandeur and gaiety, which only threatened to oppress me. The splendid carpets and gilded ceilings, the pictures and mirrors, and statuary, and articles of *virtu*, made my eyes and heart ache. It was necessary to be born to this magnificence and glitter, in order to sit down to its enjoyment and close one's senses to the squalor and wretchedness lying outside, covered by the same sky, but in no other respect seeming to be a production of the same earth. To be here, too, perhaps, subject to the whims and humours of a capricious mistress, was not to be independent as I wished to be. What a hard matter it was to put to proper use the willing labour of either head or hand!

I stood in the midst of this splendour, gazing in the fire and forgetting it. I thought of my grandfather, yet upon the sea—alone there with

his God! I thought of many things that tended to dissatisfy me with the present. Then I thought of poor Clémence, and I exclaimed aloud and involuntarily,—"Thank God that I am at least free!"

"Free!" said a voice beside me. "I did not come here to play the eavesdropper, and I give you welcome to Paris, mademoiselle Payne," said M. de Beausset: "but what a wild dream this of yours is! What right have *you* to feel yourself free where all else are slaves—slaves to fashions and customs, to prejudices and superstitions; slaves to their own follies and passions? What do you call freedom?"

"The right of being such a voluntary slave as you have described. The right of forging my own fetters."

"And you think you possess this freedom?"

"By fits and starts I do; though I have more reason to feel myself a slave, indeed, when I look round me here and remember what I am."

"You pain me," said M. de Beausset. "I have had my own share, it is true, in bringing you here, but it was involuntary. I spoke against it; I would gladly have kept you in the asylum where I first placed you."

I thought this was not a very complimentary speech, but I could afford to let it pass.

"I have no right to quarrel with fate as one

who is free to choose," I said, "and doubtless my thanks are due to some one for the motive that brought me here. My thanks are still due to you for introducing me to the kind friends I have left behind me."

"Don't thank me, pray. Burden me with anything but the gratitude that always comes to nothing!"

I thought there was an implied reproach in these words.

"If I am dissatisfied, it is the fault of circumstances rather than of my nature," I said. "I think I am capable of feeling truly grateful for the help that has been afforded me,—for the protection I have received."

"I don't doubt that," said M. de Beausset, moving uneasily from the chair against which he had been leaning. "Hang it! how hard it is to make one's self understood! Don't thank me, even in your heart, till you see the issue of all this—that's all. Some day you may see reason to curse me for my interference."

"Sir?"

He stood for a moment with his hand pressed to his forehead, as if too abstracted to hear me. I had a full view of his tall, manly figure; of his noble head, with its clustering curls of dark hair; of his side-face, sharply and delicately cut, as if by the hand of a sculptor. It pained me to see

how the broad forehead was contracted, and the firm mouth compressed. What could it mean? Was my presence there, which he had said he could have dispensed with, a pain to him? This was not mending matters for me.

"If I have been disagreeably forced upon you personally, M. de Beausset," I said, "there is still an easy remedy. I have gained my first wish in having been enabled to reach Paris. I have no fear of not being able to earn a living in some way."

"My God! I must be misunderstood!" said M. de Beausset, in agitation. "No, by Heaven! you shall not do this—you mistake me altogether. None would have more rejoiced to receive you, if I could have believed that your coming here was for your own good or—— The fact is, mademoiselle Payne, you must set me down as an extraordinary fellow, whose vagaries are not worth noticing. By and bye, you will discover that the smoothest of all destinies has fairly ennuied me to death. I envy you the necessity that makes life a struggle to you; the absence of outward that leaves you in possession of inward power."

"And it is thus that Providence equalizes the destinies of earth?"

"Yes. In some way or other we are made to

feel our mortality, our impotence, exalt ourselves as we will. If we are not humbled by others, we are humbled by our own failures and infirmities, and the oppressor is often more of a slave than the oppressed. This knowledge should reconcile us to much."

"If one was a philosopher: but this knowledge is not universal. For my part, it would not reconcile me to injustice to know that my oppressor possessed less spiritual freedom than myself. I should then despise myself."

"We must positively discard philosophy, then; and I am afraid you have too much of that same spiritual freedom to make an orthodox Catholic. What! have you not resigned yourself implicitly into the hands of your new teachers? Have you any mental reservations?"

I was annoyed by the light, mocking tone in which he spoke, and he smiled sarcastically, I thought maliciously.

"M. de Beausset," I said, "I have been in the habit of thinking for myself, and I am not likely to believe more than seems good to me."

"You have much of the stubbornness of heresy about you yet, I see," said M. de Beausset. "In fact it surprised me when I heard that you had become a convert to the true faith. Beware, however, how you bring scandal upon us of the

hôtel de Lammenais, who are famous for our obedience to the Church. You will find nothing to equal us in this respect in Paris."

It was impossible to believe him serious in what he said, in spite of his gravity. I turned and looked in the fire again.

"Our common mistress is very tyrannical, mademoiselle," continued M. de Beausset. "She knows we are both waiting, and you see how she trifles with our impatience. It is twelve o'clock by Nôtre Dame. Ah, Annette, what news?"

"My young lady wishes to see you both: you, monsieur, and mademoiselle," said the pretty young grisette who had entered. "Please to walk this way."

We followed her to a richly-furnished dressing-room, in which we found mademoiselle Emillie de Lammenais seated before a large cheval glass, her long fair hair floating over her neck and shoulders. She was *petit* and pretty, with small features, blue eyes, and a brilliant complexion.

"Come here and let me look at you," she said, without turning her head. "Both together, you know—you two who met so romantically! Ah, she is handsome; is she not, Victor? I like the name, too—Marguerite. Now I think I shall take you into great favour—both of you, though *you* scarcely deserve it, Victor."

"You were always capricious and cruel to

myself," said M. de Beausset. "You have received my bouquet? I hope it has pleased you."

"Ah, it is superb!" said mademoiselle Lammenais, glancing carelessly at a group of exotic flowers lying on the dressing-table. "How long is it your pleasure to weary me with compliments this morning?"

"Not longer than you wish, certainly," said M. de Beausset. "Perhaps I had better give you a respite, Emillie."

"Ah, charmante! but *will* you? Marguerite, I have a caprice that you should braid my hair this morning. See, here is a model for you. I am told that you can do almost anything."

"I fear that reputation will cause you disappointment," I said, "but I will try my best." I glanced at the print representing a head of hair elaborately plaited behind, and in front laid in smooth bands. I commenced operations, and M. de Beausset stood with folded arms gazing at us both.

"Ah, what fairy fingers!" exclaimed mademoiselle Lammenais, surveying me in the glass. "Allow me to look at your hands, Marguerite."

I held them out in some confusion.

"Beautiful! are they not, Victor? So white and tapering, so delicately rosy and soft!"

"They are marvellously like your own, Emillie."

"I can set that compliment down for nothing, else I should quarrel with you. What does your English play say, Marguerite? 'Behold the foil that sets this brightness off!' Monsieur's speech reminded me of that."

I had read the play of "The Inconstant," and this quotation made me blush.

"I am unfortunate to-day," said M. de Beausset. "I must positively go and ride off my chagrin. Where shall I find you to-night, Emillie?"

"At madame la Marquise de Pauvenay's, if you like to come. Ah, Marguerite! you are progressing divinely! M. de Beausset, I must thank you for giving me such a treasure." She held to him her small hand as she spoke.

"I am averse to receiving thanks till I feel assured that I have conferred a benefit," said M. de Beausset, moving off.

"Ah, see! Now the monster is turning upon you, Marguerite! Never mind, I shall like you all the better. Bon jour, monsieur."

He returned the salute and left us.

"What horrid creatures the men are!" said mademoiselle de Lammenais: "how I hate their compliments, that rarely mean anything but impertinence! Don't you, Marguerite?"

I confessed that I had had no experience this way.

"No, really? and you so handsome! What misfortune! You have, then, all this dreadfulness to come! Do you know I am in hopes that M. de Beausset admires you. It would be so tiresome to have a husband entirely devoted to one's self."

"You cannot mean this?" I said, in the simplicity of my surprise.

"Ah, mon Dieu! yes. But you are English, and the English rejoice in being ennuied. What a cold country, not to afford you a lover before this time! How old are you?"

"I was seventeen last month."

"And I am eighteen. Holy Mother! I have been pestered to death with adorers for the last two years. Now I begin to feel weary, and submit myself to a marriage de convenance with M. de Beausset. You must see that we are well matched."

In what respect? I thought. In mutual indifference? I should have considered M. de Beausset capable of profounder feeling. Was he mercenary? Had *ennui* driven him to this union without love that promised no happiness? How I pitied them both while I condemned them!

"Ah, I like myself to-day!" exclaimed mademoiselle de Lammenais, surveying herself in the glass. "You shall always dress my hair—will you? You are very good. You shall accompany

me to-night to madame la Marquise de Pauvenay's. Just now religion is the fashion, and there is a furor for making converts. You are *my* convert, remember. Ah! I shall enjoy your confusion at the compliments you will receive, for you are really very beautiful. Don't you know that? Why, you are positively blushing! Heigho! I must be very religious to-day, or I shall begin to envy you."

I was summoned from mademoiselle de Lammenai's dressing-room to attend her grandmother, the comtesse. Madame Maraude led the way to a small boudoir on the same floor, in which I found the old lady in company with father Dessalle. She was dressed in a bygone fashion, appeared to be very old and wrinkled, very nervous, and fidgetty too. She was reclined upon a couch, propped up with pillows, and was surrounded with crucifixes, rosaries, and manuals of devotion. In her hands she held a piece of embroidery. For some minutes I wondered who she reminded me of, till at length I felt sure that she resembled lady Leigh.

"Sit down, child," she said, "here beside me. My eyes are growing dim, but I must yet see to do good. Ah, pauvre innocent! so they used you ill in your own country? How could you expect different from heretics? What a blessing to be received into the fold of the true church! Mother

Madeleine consigns you especially to my charge; and I shall desire to see you frequently, though you will attend upon my granddaughter. You, so young in the faith, will need constant instruction and admonition. Father Dessalle, too, will pay you constant attention. God has given you to us, and we shall take care of you. Come closer to me, I want to see you."

My heart warmed towards this old lady, who addressed me as a daughter, who did not shrink from me as lady Leigh had done. I moved nearer to her, and she took my hand.

"Ah, pretty!" she said; "very pretty. Don't you think me very old and ugly? Yet I, too, was considered very handsome once. How necessary it is that we should fix our thoughts upon eternal things!"

"None can teach her that truth better than yourself, comtesse," said father Dessalle; "and for the present I shall leave her with you. Have you any commands for me?"

"I wish you would call again to-night, just to see how I am," said the comtesse. "And you really think I am not looking worse?"

"Decidedly," said father Dessalle. "You are a little nervous, that is all. I shall call in the evening, and hope to find you better."

"Ah, what a dear man he is!" said the comtesse, after he was gone. "The priests are the

only truly polite men, after all. Father Dessalle never loses the recollection of what I was. My dear, I am English like you; I was a belle at the court of George the Third. When I married the Comte de Lammenais, and came to Paris in 1815, I was considered the finest woman at the court of Louis, though I had then passed my bloom. Isn't that true, Maraude?"

"Quite true, madame," said Maraude. "Ah, those were days! There were the Duc de Lancy and Comte Lammenais dying for you; and poor Monsieur de St. Moray! Ah, madame! you were very cruel! I would not have your sins that way to answer for."

The comtesse simpered; her sins of that description did not seem to lie heavily upon her conscience.

"Ah, we lost everything when the Bourbons began to decline!" said the comtesse, as if she mentally charged the new dynasty with robbing her of her youth. "The bourgeois king has no attraction at his court for the old nobility of France. They would rob us of our religion, too, in these days. Holy Mother! they are growing more philosophical and sceptical than in the times of Voltaire! My poor child, I must take great care of you, for you don't understand by what dangers you are beset. I think you have a very pretty hand; let me see. I am a connois-

seur in hands. My family are remarkable for beautiful hands; and at the court of George the Third myself and my sister, lady Leigh, were pronounced to have the most perfect hands in England. Do look, Maraude! I declare I could fancy these had once been my own!"

I turned pale and cold whilst they were examining my hands. Miserable inheritance! Perhaps this was the reason why these hands had never done me any good service! If I had had any right to claim such a relationship, Emillie de Lammenais would then have been my cousin!

"Well, I declare," said Maraude, "they are exactly like what yours were! exactly like mademoiselle Emillie's! How singular!"

"Be proud of your hands," said the comtesse; "they are a mark of gentle birth. But, alas! I am wandering into vanities! What matters hands, or anything else that belongs to mortality! Look at mine: you may still see what they have been. The hands are, unfortunately, the first to fade. Maraude, give me that rosary."

Maraude handed her a long string of beads, with a cross attached. The lips and fingers of the comtesse moved rapidly in concert, as for the space of several minutes she occupied herself with this bauble. Maraude bowed her head very reverently during the silence; and I sat looking, I fear, very foolish.

"You see," said the comtesse, at length, handing the rosary to Maraude, "how hard it is to be a Christian. I have suffered my thoughts to wander away to vanities, and I am compelled to perform penance. Six Paternosters and six Ave Maries. It is heavy work, but we must keep right before God. Ah! I feel another twinge, Maraude. I have been neglecting this work for our blessed Lady of Cleury! but, Holy Virgin! I mean to finish it directly. Mademoiselle Payne, you shall read to me from the lives of the saints; no better reading to divert our thoughts from the world. What examples to us!"

From the glimpse she had given me of her past life, I thought the comtesse was beginning late with good examples. I read to her from the lives of the saints, and listened to her commentaries during an hour and a half. Then she told me to look at her work.

"Can you embroider in this way?" she said. "No? Then I must teach you. It is a meritorious work. Ah! what a blessing it is to be allowed so to cover our sins! This is a robe for our Lady of Cleury. I intend to enrich it with several of the gems I used to wear. Alas! I have no further use for them myself. Is your arm as beautiful as your hand? I had splendid arms, and the Duc de Lancy used to say he envied the diamonds that sparkled on them. Ah! you should have seen

what a fine gentleman he was! But I am wandering again: give me the rosary."

In the absence of Maraude, I had the honour of performing this service for her. Her penance this time was very brief, and she desired me to ring the bell. Maraude appeared.

"Tell my granddaughter it is time I saw her," said the comtesse. "I would have her set a good example to our young proselyte."

Mademoiselle Lammenais presently entered, and curtsied very demurely.

"Come hither, child," said the comtesse. "I don't know what heavier penance I need than having this charge upon me of the young and thoughtless. Have you attended to the duties enjoined by your confessor, Emillie?"

"I have repeated a dozen Ave Maries since breakfast," said Emillie, yawning.

"That's right! But I fear you don't attend to the more necessary work, Emillie. You don't admonish M. de Beausset as you ought to do."

"What am *I* to do with him? He is the nephew of a cardinal, and you surely don't suspect him of heresy? Don't weary me too much about him, grandmamma, or I shall never endure him for a husband. You know he is not a Duc de Lancy—not even a Chevalier de Moray."

"Ah, you saucy child!" said the comtesse. "Sit down, and let me talk to you, for I see you

are going all wrong. No wonder that you should be led astray in these degenerate days! There is no mentioning M. de Beausset and the Duc de Lancy in the same breath, it is true. The latter was so noble, so chivalrous, so religious! Holy Mother! when I first became a convert, how he laboured to keep me right! I shall never forget when I first put on the dress of a Sister of Mercy! He said he had never seen any one become it so well. It was through him I wore it so often, and you may be sure I did a deal of good. Yes, he laboured for my spiritual benefit. You see, he felt great interest in me."

"Ah, grandmamma, everybody knows that he loved you, and that despair killed him!"

"Does the world say that?" asked the comtesse, her dim eyes kindling. "How could I help it? I was married, you know. Ah, those were hard times to live consistently! There was the Chevalier de St. Moray, who shot himself, and they laid that to my charge: it is a censorious world!"

"Then there was the Comte de Ligny said Emillie.

"The finest man in France, I give you my word!" said the comtesse. "All the court-ladies were in love with him, married and single; but he *would* devote himself to me. How could I help it? Ah, I have gone through a great deal of trouble!"

"I shouldn't make a trouble of it at all," said Emillie.

"Ah, child, you are talking sinfully!" said the comtesse, relapsing into her devotional mood. "Don't say that I have led you astray. Come, you need a little mortification: you shall bestow some of your jewellery upon this robe for our blessed Lady."

Emillie glanced at it, I thought, with contempt.

"Anything for peace," she said, unclasping a diamond bracelet from her wrist. "This should absolve me from many sins, grandma, for it was a favourite."

"No doubt it will," said the comtesse, receiving the bracelet. "Ah, there's nothing like mortification of the flesh! I'll tell M. l'Abbé Roullet that you must be remembered in the prayers of the community. Now I think you may go forth safely; but be upon your guard, the world is full of snares."

Emillie laughed lightly.

"I leave you in good company," she said, turning to me; "at dinner-time I shall see you again, and then we can arrange about the evening. *Addio!*" And she went out with a bound, as if rejoicing in the release.

I passed the remainder of the day until dinner-time with the comtesse, whose alternate fits of vanity and devotion would have amused me,

if I had been less interested in the faith she professed. I began to feel that my new creed was a miserable failure. After all, what did it matter? I was only left where I was, except that I had made an advance that promised to benefit me temporarily. But how desolate I felt in the world as I thought this!

CHAPTER VII.

THE comtesse, mademoiselle de Lammenais, and myself dined together. I did not inquire too minutely into the cause of my being thus treated as one of the family; I did not shrink from the place accorded to me as one unworthy of it. Absorbed by reflections, that made the present important only in connexion with the past, I was incapable of being impressed by much of what was around me. I accommodated myself to circumstances with a sort of mechanical indifference, caring little for the means by which the object nearest my heart was to be brought about. And this was the reason why, when in the evening I again attended mademoiselle de Lammenais in her dressing-room, and she insisted upon my accompanying her to the Marquise de Pauvenay's, I attempted to resist, being sensitive on the subject of my individual honour, at the

same time that I cared less than nothing for gaiety and show. I did not like the idea of being exhibited as a convert; feeling, as I did, that nothing was more probable than my ultimately becoming disgusted with the whole system of the Romish church. I was indignant with the fate that seemed to deny me all freedom of action; that forced upon me conduct unworthy of myself; that familiarised me with compromises, to which I could only stoop with a proud heart and a stiff neck. I went to madame la Marquise de Pauvenay's, however; and, after successfully resisting mademoiselle de Lammenais' attempt to adorn me with some of her own ornamental costume, I was pronounced to be perfect in my own simple muslin dress. As we proceeded in the carriage, and mademoiselle de Lammenais spoke of the enthusiasm with which she anticipated I should be received, I could only hope that she was miscalculating: but I supposed it was the fact, as I had been informed, that religion was just then the fashion; for I was caressed, and questioned, and made so much of by the brilliant company assembled at the hôtel de Pauvenay, that, with all my equanimity and presence of mind, I did not acquit myself in a manner at all satisfactory to my own notions of what was right. In a scene so animated and so new to me, however, I saw

much that irresistibly took me out of myself. In this assemblage of the highly-educated, the noble, and the wealthy, I found many of the elements that made up the littleness of the inferior people whom I had encountered at Mrs. Brown's. Youth did not impress me with its freshness, nor age with its decorum. There seemed to me to be an abundance of giddiness, and affectation, and jaded sentiment, and hot-house enthusiasm, that was scarcely fitted for every-day use. The two persons who struck me as an exception were M. de Beausset, who stood aloof and spoke little, and seldom approached mademoiselle de Lammenais, and our hostess, the Marquise de Pauvenay. The latter, a fine-looking woman of about forty, with noble features, a profusion of dark hair, and large black eyes, that seemed to hide a world of sorrow in their troubled depths, interested me so much, that I could not help following her movements with my eyes. Perfectly courteous and attentive to all her guests, there was a restlessness about her, perhaps apparent only to myself; and I fancied I discovered the source of her uneasiness. The marquis himself was a handsome, manly-looking personage, of about her own age; and wherever he was, there her eyes wandered furtively, or rested for a moment with an agony of expression, that sent a sympathetic thrill through my whole frame.

The marquis, on his side, never noticed her, even by a glance. I guessed that there was some estrangement between them; and that wealth, and rank, and splendour, had failed to bring satisfaction to that yearning woman's heart.

The chief purposes for which this brilliant company had assembled, appeared to be flirtation and the discussion of the prevailing topics of the day. Conversations on literature, religion, even politics, were going on all round me; and certainly the French are a people who excel in the ephemeral brilliancy of spoken words. There was a vast deal of wit, agreeably veiling some profundity; and the vivacity and earnestness with which even trifles were discussed, imparted a certain importance to them. I could not help being amused, though my thoughts would wander back and onward, and though I was so much absorbed in observing the Marquise de Pauvenay. I was myself particularly seized upon by a devout old lady, the Comtesse de Reuilly, whose style of dress shocked me, exhibiting her withered person in a manner that took away all reverence for her years. As she admonished me, especially on the subject of relics and pilgrimages, I could not help wondering that religion had not taught her more decorum. I had been chained to her side for an hour or two, when M. de Beausset considerately advanced, and asked if I

would walk for a minute into the fresh air. I gladly took his offered arm, and he led me out upon a balcony filled with evergreens. It was a still night, and the moon was shining brilliantly.

"What do you think of us by this time," he said, "now that you are become one of us?"

"I am not at all sure that I have become one of you, in the sense you mean. I think that you are a people who like to be flattered, and that, therefore, the less I say of you at present the better. I must search further."

"Into what? we are all surface."

"Into your religion, if you have any. What was a mockery in England seems to be a mummery here. I fear I am a born sceptic."

"Did you say this to the Comtesse de Reuilly just now?"

"No; I heard all and said little. What could I say to a very foolish old woman, who evidently does not herself understand what she is talking about?"

"So you reserve for me the honour of being the depositary of your worse than heretical notions?"

It was a fact, that I should not have spoken so decidedly to any one else. There was no frippery about M. de Beausset: it was impossible to meet his frank look and not trust him implicitly. Be-

sides, I felt pretty sure that he was something more than heretical himself. His words, however, annoyed me a little, and I attempted to draw my arm from his. He held my hand and detained it.

"Marguerite," he said—"others name you so, and I have the first right—I have heard you with mingled sensations of pain and pleasure. The pain is uppermost, but I rejoice in being able to honour you as I have wished to do since our first meeting. You will remember I told you, that good Christians were rare articles to be met with anywhere. As to Christianity itself, why ——"

He paused, perhaps wanting to hear my opinion of it.

"It seems," I said, "to be a subtle spirit, that evaporates in mortal hands."

"It was not meant to be moulded by hands or directed by heads, but to be firmly treasured up by the heart," said M. de Beausset. "We should not so scramble after these shadows of it, these mockeries and mummeries, if we had not an inborn consciousness that there was a substance somewhere. I am only a blind leader of the blind; I do no one thing that I feel to be right: yet I cannot shut my eyes to the fact, that noble men and women have adorned life and glorified death through this same faith, and that without it

altogether we should be infinitely more degraded than we are. As to the examples that meet our eyes in daily life, I, for one, don't feel myself qualified to cast the first stone at them."

"You are wandering away from the question and dwindling me down to a mere sectarian Pharisee, M. de Beausset," I said. "I have received so much individual kindness since I came to France, that I should be ungrateful, indeed, if I did not feel and acknowledge it. But I shall begin to be despicable to myself if I continue to receive this kindness on the condition of acknowledging my belief in monstrosities, that only excite my astonishment and disgust, of acquiescing in oppressions that rouse my indignation. I would rather live a free and vagabond life with José and Morgotte than keep my place here on such terms."

"Ah, I dreaded coming to this!" said M. de Beausset, shrugging his shoulders. "Well! run away from us, as you did from the English; where will you go? where to find the impossibility you seek, to be free from the trammels of popular practice or belief? You must try to put up with us as we are, Marguerite. Absurdities are only absurdities after all—laugh at them. As to oppressions, never attempt to set yourself up as a redresser of wrongs."

"Well," I said, after a pause, "it matters little; for my sojourn here must, under any circumstances, be very brief."

"Why, you don't mean to say that you are going to run away from us in reality?"

"Most assuredly I shall, so soon as I can raise sufficient means to carry me where I alone wish to be."

"To England again?"

"Oh, no, no! God forbid I should be forced to return there! To another land, far away over the wide sea; the land of which I dream day and night."

"You strange, wild girl!" said M. de Beausset, grasping my hand till the pressure pained me, "who gave you this mighty power of attracting, and bewildering, and torturing me, from which I cannot free myself? Would to God we had never met!"

He dropped my arm as he spoke, and I hastily re-entered the room alone. The Chevalier de Roubillac, to whom I had previously been introduced, conducted me to a seat, and engaged me in a lengthened conversation. I suppose I answered coherently, for I afterwards heard that he had expressed a high opinion of my understanding; but my mind was in a perfect tumult while I spoke. This M. de Beausset, who had haunted me so long, as one to whom I owed a

large debt — to whom I could speak as I could speak to none other — had certainly acquired a power of some kind over myself, and of which his impassioned words first made me conscious. They conveyed a meaning terrible to him and me, but they sent a thrill of wild delight through my very soul that I made no attempt to free myself from. This exquisite pleasure, in the midst of so much pain, mastered me; and I hoarded it as no miser ever hoarded his gold. With the knowledge that I could never be anything to him more than I was, even if he had himself been free to choose, I could not help exulting in the thought that I had created an interest in his heart for which I was indebted to no power out of my own hands. The same sympathy of soul that drew us together was henceforward to keep us apart; but there was to me almost too exquisite a pleasure in the very suffering of this situation. I no longer felt my utter desolation, for even here there was one human being — and he one of the noblest of his kind — who must think of me perforce, and without indifference. The very impossibilities about us seemed to sublimate this hopeless attachment. We should honour each other the more in the mutual avoidance, that would leave unsevered the strong cord that should have bound us to each other. This, then, was my destiny; and I thought

it a glorious one. I had been loved for myself alone, and could I bear the image of one, whose nature I believed to be noble, in my heart to the grave?

I was not deceived in my estimate of M. de Beausset, who avoided me as much as possible. On my part, I was more eager than ever to raise the means of going out to Australia; and mademoiselle de Lammenais, together with the comtesse, with whom I was to remain after the marriage of the former, if I chose, tendered me so liberal a salary, that I hoped to be able to accomplish my object in twelve months: a long time to look forward to, and yet not long, considering under what circumstances I had conceived this plan of working my way to my grandfather.

I passed most of my time with the comtesse, who liked the society of young people, and who could not often command that of her granddaughter, who seemed to be mistress of her own time and actions. What with the reminiscences of her gallantries and other records of her early days, and the odd devices and encumbrances of her fits of devotion, the comtesse kept me pretty well amused. I could not help pitying her very much. She seemed to live in a constant terror of her own old age. It seemed to me more of a bugbear to her than the hell or the purgatory, for exemption from which she laboured so continu-

ously and hardly. She would not look at her own face in the glass, and frequently asked Maraude and myself if we thought she looked so *very* old. Her hands were a constant source of lamentation to her. With all her cumbrous contrivances for salvation, her spiritual trust appeared to be small, for she had a great horror of dying; and this state of mind magnified her small ailments, so that she fancied herself near death sometimes twice in a day. Then it was at once ludicrous and distressing to hear her alternately asking the intercession of the saints, and calling upon us to assure her that she was not so ill as she thought she was. To me she became very much attached, because I was a patient listener, and did not care to leave her. She rehearsed my good qualities to every visitor, and blessed the saints and mother Madeleine for having provided her with a companion so suited to her every way. In my constant and close communication with her I learned a good deal of the Leigh family, of which I had been in ignorance. Herself and lady Leigh were the daughters of the late and sisters of the present earl of ——; and the comtesse had become estranged from her family through her marriage and subsequent conversion to the church of Rome. She spoke of the frigid, puritanical piety of lady Leigh, with ridicule at one time, and at another with horror; and mentioned some of the

enormities of General and Colonel Leigh (who, she said, were well matched), that made my blood run cold. These revelations, however, her dislike to these people, and her kindness to myself, and the consciousness that some of her blood flowed in my veins, by whatever means, served to attach me to her, silly and unprincipled as she was. I quitted her with real reluctance, when mademoiselle de Lammenais would have her own way and drag me out into society. In that society M. de Beausset never approached to address me; and both in her own home and elsewhere, wherever I encountered her, the Marquise de Pauvenay absorbed my interest. She had evidently been stricken by some mortal sorrow. She was wandering about with the arrow of death in her heart. I one day mentioned her to the comtesse.

"Ah, yes!" she said, "you are right; the poor marquise has something to put up with. She loves her husband, and he hates her: everybody knows that, and that de Pauvenay is the greatest libertine in France. He is really bad, for he hates his children, too; and there are three of them, poor things! shut up in an old château many leagues off. He urges his wife to stop with them, but she, unhappy woman! lingers here to learn the extent of her misery. There was nothing so enormously wicked in my days."

I thought there had been something very like

it in her own days, as several of her admirers had been married men, to say nothing of her having been married herself. It struck me as very odd that she never mentioned the Comte de Lammenais, except on two or three occasions, when she spake of funds appropriated to the payment of masses for the repose of his soul. Altogether it struck me that morality, amongst the higher classes, was not in a very flourishing condition in France.

After being in the hôtel de Lammenais three months, I was enabled to transmit to mother Meulen the money she had lent me, together with a small present of a shawl; and I heard from her, in reply, that they were all well and happy, and glad to hear of my well-being. In the course of that time I had contrived to put Clémence's letter in the post, but of the poor girl herself I could gain no tidings. Her probation and M. de Beausset's were to end at the same time. He was to be married and she professed at Midsummer: how would it be with both of them?

I was allowed a large latitude for a convert, for my own declaration that I did not yet feel prepared excused me thus far from attending the confessional. Therefore I was not as yet formally received into the church. Father Dessalle and the comtesse admonished me frequently on this

point, showing the comfort and advantage of unburdening the conscience of its accumulations of sin, and plentifully supplying me with books upon the subject. These books revolted me; if I did not of myself know where to begin, they, at least, could not tell me where I might end. I had many thoughts and failings that I wished to keep sacred betwixt God and myself, but none so gross as those that I understood I might be questioned about, according to the formula set before me. Between my strong disgust and my necessities I did not know how it would be with me; but I was quite resolved that no mortal man should have the chance of putting those questions to me.

There was still the great blank in my life, the void that might not be filled up;—no tidings of those I loved — no hope of them. Dreams brought the lost back to me, but they were never happy ones. I stood with them amid battles and shipwrecks, or we were starving and shivering together in darkened rooms or on bleak heaths, or I was kneeling and weeping by their dying beds. The thoughts of the day were scarcely better than this, though the old conviction that I must go on was still strong upon me. What was the something that I felt it imperative upon me to reach?

During these months I had frequently been

told that I was handsome. I had, to my great annoyance, a number of admirers, of whom the Chevalier de Roubillac was the most persevering. He was a man of middle age, almost gigantic in stature, and his bushy, black whiskers and mustachios, gave a fierce expression to an otherwise rather unmeaning face. This gentleman, who was distinguished by great fluency of speech, but whose character did not seem to be remarkable any way, had been in the army under Louis and Charles, and he was in the army still. He was, moreover, of a good family, and possessed an estate. He took it into his head to propose formally for my hand.

I gave him the only answer that I had to give, for no privation and dependence on the one hand, or prospect of advantage on the other, could have induced me to bestow my hand where my heart was indifferent, even if the many other obstacles in the way had not existed. The chevalier, however, was one of those monotonously wearying people, who can neither be offended, nor alarmed, nor convinced; and with a patience quite incompatible with ardour he continued to intercede and hope on. He had made his intentions known to the comtesse, and had asked her to use her influence in his behalf; but the comtesse took my part, and expressed her pleasure at his dismissal. Mademoiselle de Lammenais, on the contrary,

considered it an advantageous offer, and marvelled at my rejection. She held out all kinds of inducements to bring me, as she said, to reason.

"You say you are too young,—*ma foi!* it isn't with us as it is with you English, who fall at once into slavery and dowdyism on getting married. Here marriage confers a liberty rarely to be enjoyed by the single. Few young ladies are so independent as I am, for I am peculiarly placed. When once you are married the number of your admirers will increase tenfold. These are great advantages,—don't you see?"

"Advantages of which I could make no use," I said. "Such conduct seems to me immoral; it shocks me: my education has been different, and I cannot alter these views."

Mademoiselle de Lammenais laughed at me heartily. "What a solemn face!" she said; "how really awful this prudery is! There is less of actual sin amongst us with our free manners than amongst you with all this pretence of sanctity. Here comes M. de Beausset, who, of all the men I know, is most deserving of an English wife. He himself has a few humdrum notions that almost frighten me."

We were seated during this conversation in an arbour in the garden. I had not seen M. de Beausset to speak to him for nearly three months

—not since the night when we were on the balcony at the Marquise de Pauvenay's. As he now approached, I arose, and attempted to go away, but mademoiselle de Lammenais stopped me.

"Another of your English notions," she said; "you fancy you may be an interruption to some necessary billing and cooing, while, in fact, if you leave us together, we shall be sure to quarrel. Is it not so, Victor? Marguerite has been making me laugh; she is horrified at the idea of having admirers after she is married."

"A singular young lady, indeed!" said M. de Beausset. "Does she fancy she can always be in love with her husband?"

"Not quite so monstrous as that," said mademoiselle de Lammenais; "she only supposes she ought to be. If one could cure her of these notions, there might be hope for the poor chevalier."

"My notions of any kind would make no difference in that respect," I said, quietly continuing the work I was upon—a new robe for our Lady of Loretto.

"I never met with any one so obdurate, so unimpressible," said mademoiselle de Lammenais. "She will neither please others nor be pleased herself. Positively, a conquest seems to afford her no pleasure. I have an idea that she has left her heart behind her in England."

I looked up in surprise. "Indeed, you mistake," I said; "in England I had something else to do and think of."

"Well, don't look so horrified," said mademoiselle de Lammenais, laughing. "One might almost imagine that in England you consider being in love a species of crime."

"Circumstances may make it so."

"But—bless me! you 're not married already, are you, Marguerite?"

"No, certainly not," I said, smiling at the oddness of the idea. "I am not, and I never shall be."

"What folly! What a singular freak in a girl young and handsome! M. de Beausset, you have been very surly of late; you never help me as you should. You neglect your protégée too; why do you not advise her for her good on this momentous occasion?"

M. de Beausset, after saluting us politely, had seated himself, and was now leaning on the arbour table, apparently watching my work. The question made him start, and he threw himself back.

"I advise!" he exclaimed; "I have never been able to advise myself for any good purpose. Mademoiselle Marguerite is the best judge of what is for her own happiness."

"How cold and precise! Do you know,

Victor, that you are very English in your notions, and that——"

"And that you are very French in yours. Yes, I have had a glimmering of the fact. I believe I spoke to you on this very subject last night."

"Oh, if you are going to lecture me again I must positively run for it. I have a hundred things to do this morning, and you two will get on very well together."

She tripped away, and I turned pale with fright as I hastily rose to follow her. M. de Beausset held my arm, and detained me.

"Don't fear me, Marguerite," he said; "I will say nothing that you ought not to listen to, but you *must* hear me. You do not yet understand your position here, which is becoming dangerous. I have brought you into this trouble, and I must help you out of it."

I thought he alluded to the persecution of the Chevalier Roubillac. "You magnify trouble and danger, sir," I said. "The comtesse quite approves of what I have done, and she can protect me."

"Yes, from a husband: ther she nor the priests wish you to marry ey have at present another destiny for yc you trust yourself with me a little further down this walk?"

I placed my work upon the table and rose up;

he seemed to have something serious to communicate to me, and I did not hesitate about learning what it was. As he passed, he gave the embroidery a contemptuous toss.

"For whom amongst the blessed do you design this finery?" he asked.

"It is the comtesse's gift to our Lady of Loretto," I said.

"Well, kings ere now have employed themselves in making petticoats for the same personage. But the comtesse—I thought she devoted herself exclusively to our Lady of Cleury. Perhaps she considered it necessary to propitiate the other lady. You see there are above a score of them, and to offend one is to offend all."

"For shame, M. de Beausset!" I said; "you profess this faith, and you ridicule it!"

"Think as hardly of me as you like, only don't take me for a fool," he said. "I could not bear that from you." He led me into a retired and shady walk, and then drew forth a long scroll of paper.

"Cast your eyes over this, and be quick," he said. "You see your name written here—'Margaret Payne:' read what follows."

This was what followed the name: "Bold, ambitious, strongly inclined to unbelief; enterprising, and particularly sensitive to kindness.

Must be trusted with some power as a motive, and must discern good in it. Unmanageable here, and must be removed."

Poor me! could it be a fact that the Church had thus been occupied in analysing my character all this time? I lifted my eyes to M. de Beausset.

"How did you get possession of this?" I asked.

"I am indebted for it to the ingenuity of José, who has peculiar opportunities for helping his friends who may be in distress. You may rest assured that it was stolen, or it would never have come into my possession."

"Ah! I shall bring you into trouble," I said. "How unhappy all this is! But there is a remedy: I must fly from this place."

"You must not!" said M. de Beausset. "Have a little pity upon me, Marguerite—you will drive me mad! This missive had to be conveyed, with others, to Rome, and the messenger is yet detained on the road. You are perfectly safe for some time to come. When there is danger to you, I shall know it, for I am on the watch. Will you trust to me, and remain quiet for the present?"

I was not so much alarmed on my own account by this danger, which only threatened to make a

tool of me. Now that I was forewarned, what did it matter? I readily gave my promise to M. de Beausset on one condition.

"I can remain without any fear, if you will leave me to my own resources. If you interfere and involve yourself, you will force me to fly."

"And you will not accept any service at my hands, Marguerite? You despise me, as you do others."

"You do me injustice," I said. "You should see the propriety of my request."

"I am already a martyr to propriety," said M. de Beausset; "I hate the word! Promise, then, that you will not shrink from asking my help, if you need it."

But I knew that I *should* shrink from asking it; and I remained silent, and hurried on to the arbour to fetch my work.

"This is cruel and unkind," said M. de Beausset. "Why may I not be your friend?—Because I am fettered by this unhappy engagement, which is burdening me to death? You understand how I am punished, and you add to my misery!"

"Do not force me to despise you, indeed," I said, sternly and sorrowfully; "you, whose remembrance I would preserve in my heart without a stain."

Oh, how I dreaded being compelled to believe evil of this man!

M. de Beausset fell into one of the seats, and buried his face in his hands. I took up my work, and so left him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE was a grand fête to be given at the Marquis de Pauvenay's, and mademoiselle de Lammenais insisted upon my accompanying her. I acquiesced the less reluctantly, because I felt an uneasy interest in the poor marquise, that, in the midst of my other troubles, allowed me no rest. It is natural that the unfortunate should feel an interest in one another, but something beyond this common attraction seemed to draw me towards this forlorn and most unhappy woman: I could not help thinking that some dreadful catastrophe would be the consequence of feelings so deep and so terribly roused. Her noble figure, distinguished above all others in the crowd—her troubled, though usually calm, countenance—her wandering eyes, so often flashing, as if from some inward fire,—fascinated my gaze, so that I could observe little else when she was near me. The marquis, gallant

and attentive to every lady present, without being particular, so far as I could observe, appeared at all times to be oblivious of her presence.

I must here mention, in grateful remembrance of mademoiselle de Lammenais, that with all her faults,—rather the result of education than of any native depravity of heart,—she was generous, and affable, and confiding; free from the offensive pride that exhibits itself in self-exaltation, or in oppressing others; wishful, if not anxious, for the happiness of all around her; liberal to excess. In a word, she was not capricious; and she only became little by forgetting herself. To me, dependent and unknown, and, above all, flattered as I was in the society to which she introduced me, her sisterly manner never changed. She was constantly giving me presents of dress, that enabled me to hoard up my salary; and she seldom willingly went abroad without me.

All this inspired me, by degrees, with a grateful attachment that made me anxious for her happiness with M. de Beausset. Emotions had been roused within me that made me feel like a culprit in her presence: I crushed them out, and felt happier for the effort. He had loved her at some former period, and her own frivolity had most probably estranged him. I thought it would be well repaying the debt I owed M. de Beausset if

could restore this merely thoughtless girl to him and to herself.

And therefore I frequently spoke of what I considered wrong in her manner, both to M. de Beausset and abroad, with the freedom that she allowed me. On these occasions she unfortunately had the laugh of her prejudices against me.

"Ma chère Anglaise," she would say, "don't attempt to freeze me with these cold decorums of your nation! You forget that I was born nearer the sun, and that I have as much right to exercise my privileges as you have. You see, all this is inevitable: you continue a puritan and I a coquette."

I could get nothing more out of her; but there was this satisfaction in being with Emillie de Lammenais, that she did not care about my being anything more than the puritan she called me. Indeed, she openly asserted that it was a shame to spoil me by attempting to make a Catholic of me, perfect as I was in my original state. In her presence, therefore, I felt freed from every restraint, and this drew us more closely together. On this occasion of our attending the fête at the Marquis de Pauvenay's, she was more than usually anxious about our dress. She wished us to be dressed alike, and, to my surprise, had provided for this arrangement. There was still

a wide difference in our appearance. She was much shorter and more slender than myself; her very fair skin and braided flaxen hair were remarkable, while I was a brunette with heavy masses of dark hair curling naturally. I ineffectually attempted a remonstrance, for I considered that there was an impropriety in this outward show of an equality that did not exist. I appealed to her in every available way, feeling that I should attract more observation and criticism than would be pleasant to myself; but mademoiselle de Lammenais coaxed and entreated (she never commanded) till I was almost ashamed of my refusal; and so she had her way.

As I lost sight of mademoiselle de Lammenais almost immediately on my entrance into the crowded salons of the hôtel de Pauvenay, I soon dismissed from my mind the circumstance of our being dressed alike. She left me in charge of Madame de Vigny, a lady with whom I had some previous acquaintance, and she turned me over to the old Comtesse de Reuilly. Seated by her side, I looked vainly round for the marquise, and my companion soon brought me back to myself.

"My dear," she said, "how long do you intend to keep up this mystery that is puzzling us all? Don't you think you have teased us long enough?"

"About what, madam?"

"How innocent you look! About your real name, and birth, and connexions, to be sure. All Paris is asking, 'Who is this Marguerite who is seen and talked of everywhere, and yet whom nobody knows?' It is understood that the Chevalier Roubillac is your suitor, and people ask, 'With whom is he about to ally himself?' All this is very natural, you know. There is a rumour that you are the daughter of an English lord; others say that you are related to the de Lammenais; for my part, I don't see the use of being mystical on the subject. You are young, and this is the fault of your advisers."

"Indeed, madam," I said, hastily, "you mistake. There is no mystery, no need for any. I have no pretension; I am humbly born; I am even less than I seem to be, because I owe everything about me here to the kindness of my protectors. I explained all this to the Chevalier Roubillac when I declined the honour he intended me. I assure you this is the simple truth."

"Ah, it is a charming little romance, and I don't take this for the dénouement," said the comtesse. "I must wait longer, I see."

This distressed me very much. I could bear to receive courtesies on my own account; I was proud of the unhappy protectors of my childhood, though I felt the impossibility of proclaiming them to the world: but to be taken for

what I was not, and received in society upon the strength of suppositions, seemed to give an air of imposture even to the small place I occupied that appalled me. Surely this idea was not general? surely it was not entertained by my benefactors themselves? Yet now, when I was set thinking on the subject, even this seemed possible. I had been met with in an extraordinary manner; I had only spoken of the past as too painful for myself to dwell upon; and my education—perhaps my very appearance—might have given the idea that I was well born. M. de Beausset himself had probably fallen into this mistake. Miserable misconception! How I might be depreciated in the opinion of all these people by the knowledge of what I really was!

This kind of position revealed to me my own powers of self-sustainment; but it was less easy to support the body than the soul. To what sordid and petty necessities did I owe most of the sufferings of my past life! what trouble from the same source still lay before me! The glittering throng oppressed me with its gaiety, and as I had not yet been found by the Chevalier Roubillac, there seemed to be a good opportunity for gliding out into the garden, which I could easily do by way of the balcony. It was a moonless night, and rather cold, for it had rained during the day. I wandered into the remotest alleys, not thinking

of the impropriety of being there alone, or of the minor folly of lingering in the wet with my thin shoes. It at length occurred to me that I might be missed, and I was returning by the way of an arbour not far from the house, when I became aware that some persons were in it, by whom I must be seen if I passed, while, if I retraced my steps, I should have to go a long way round. I had come close upon the spot in the midst of the trees and thick shrubs that surrounded it, and I could not be mistaken in the two voices that met my ear during the brief pause I made. They were those of a man and a woman, and the woman was sobbing bitterly.

"Come, come, Emillie," said the man, whom I knew at once to be the Marquis de Pauvenay, "you will expose yourself to-night if you give way like this. I promise, on my honour, to take you away the instant I have completed my preparations. Don't be alarmed: I have a plan that will save us both."

"Oh, I am so wretched, Louis," sobbed his companion; "I cannot remain here, it will kill me!"

Consternation chained me to the spot on which I stood; I leaned against one of the trees, breathless and shivering. I only heard one other sentence. The marquis said, "Quick, quick! this is folly!" and the next minute he came out and

rushed past me so close that he almost touched my dress. Emillie de Lammenais also presently passed from the arbour, and walked quickly down the path leading to the balcony. I remained a long time where I was, feeling faint, sick, and frightened. I might have remained half the night, if some one had not seized my arm roughly. I started from my reverie in fresh terror, and saw the gipsy girl, Morgotte.

"What brought *you* here to be a spy upon them?" she asked in a savage tone. "Do you pretend yet that you care nothing for M. de Beausset, though you are busying yourself with the doings of his mistress?"

"I am here quite by accident, Morgotte," I said.

The girl burst into her wild laugh.

"Say that to them that will believe you," she said. "I hate you! and I know that you are full of deceit!"

As she rushed away I roused myself. I had certainly no business there; I was laying myself open to suspicions, and I had no right to expect any one to believe me in a matter in which I had exhibited such a want of prudence. I hastened back by the longer, but more retired path, which terminated in a large conservatory. The door was open, and I knew there was a communication this way into the house. In the interior I saw a

distant glimmering of radiance, that, falling amid the exotic flowers and fruits, and many-shaped leaves, produced a variety of strange lights and shadows. As I moved amidst them I heard other steps, stealthily tracking mine, I thought; but on looking round I just caught a glimpse of Morgotte and the marquise entering one of the sections of the conservatory where the darkness was unbroken. Was it possible that this unhappy woman had submitted to the degradation of making an outcast girl a spy upon her husband's actions, and the depositary of her own dishonour? What wretchedness! what an accumulation was here of sin, and shame, and pollution! All the produce of one bad man's heart, and that man so admired, so honoured by the world! In what frightful outburst of human agony and outraged trust would it all end!

I re-entered one of the saloons, and as I was looking round for the Comtesse de Reuilly I perceived mademoiselle de Lammenais chatting gaily to a circle of gentlemen, apparently full of life and spirits, and with no trace of her late agitation visible in her countenance. I shrank back; I did not feel able just then to encounter her, and I fell into the hands of the Chevalier Roubillac.

"I have been inquiring and looking for you

everywhere," he said; "what was it that spirited you away? You know that, in spite of your cruelty, I feel lost out of your presence."

He found me a seat beside the deaf old Comtesse de Bayard, who looked on this gay scene through her spectacles. It struck me as something very melancholy, this clinging of the decaying senses to the transitory enjoyments of earth. The Comtesse de Lammenais had a horror of making a public exhibition of her wrinkles and infirmities; but in her own way she destroyed all feeling of reverence in others, and was miserable in herself. How different these old people were to my grandfather, with his earnest piety regulating all the conduct of his life; to Aunt Betsy, with her strength of mind, and sturdy principle to do right, let the sacrifice be what it would! The more I saw of the world, the more I honoured these two, from whom I was, perhaps, separated for ever.

As I sat listening to the chevalier, and parrying his compliments as well as I could, I had a full view of the circle surrounding mademoiselle de Lammenais. The marquis was there, talking as gaily as the rest. I looked round in vain for the marquise. She was, perhaps, not yet capable of bringing her agony into that gay scene. These new interests were filling my heart with a profounder and more purifying sorrow.

I was lifted out of self, and, during the process, I learned that mine had not been the greatest of human trials. I might have thought that I had much to be thankful for; but that, I fear, did not occur to me. I was yet far from God, though drawing nearer to him through his creatures.

The chevalier was called from my side, and a few minutes afterwards M. de Beausset approached me.

"You look weary," he said; "I have been observing you some time."

"I am weary," I replied; and I lifted my eyes to his, pityingly.

"Ma belle Marguerite," he said, seating himself beside me, "those large, melancholy eyes of yours always make my heart ache. They possessed this influence over me from the first. To-night they are more than usually powerful: there is a look in them, too, as if you had something to reveal to me. Is it so, Marguerite?"

"Nay, it is nothing," I said, turning away.

"Nothing! what a blank word! The soul will not be satisfied with this nothing, which is the sole fruit of its wishes and its hopes. I feel to-night as one in a dry desert, who has no chance of reaching the spring that might quench his thirst, —the verdure that might assure him of life. I

am altogether in an atmosphere of decay, and rottenness, and death."

Was this presentiment? I thought so. I felt an invincible repugnance to continue this conversation, which oppressed me more than I could well bear. I was looking round for some one I knew, in order to join them, when the Comtesse de Reuilly beckoned me to approach her.

She took my arm, and led me out of the room, and down stairs.

"I think we can rely upon your discretion," she said: "the poor marquise has been seized with a fit. She is better now, and she does not want to disturb her guests. She has asked to see you. There is something very dreadful in this, I'm afraid; something fresh about the marquis, who, between you and me, uses her worse than a dog. I found her, by chance, with a strange, wild-looking girl, who must have brought her bad news. We must hear all about it, and say nothing."

She led me into a small room adjoining the conservatory, in which we found the marquise, seated, and alone. She was deadly pale, and her wild, black eyes, rested upon me, and seemed to look me through.

"You must leave us together, my friend," she

said, addressing the Comtesse de Reuilly; "I wish to speak with this young lady alone."

The comtesse looked disappointed: but there was a decision in the tone and look of the marquise that mastered her, and she went out. The marquise locked the door, and motioned me to a seat, and continued standing.

"It is known to you," she said, speaking rapidly, "because it is known to every one, that I am wronged, and that I suffer. Neglect, and reproach, and insolent pity, meet me on all sides, yet I dread inquiring into the extent of this wrong and suffering. My God! I have been degraded! (She unclasped from her wrist, in her strong agony, a costly bracelet and dashed it upon the floor.) I have seen to-night a wandering gipsy girl, who brought me fresh intelligence of my husband's infidelity. I questioned the truth of what she told me as I well might, but she said she could produce another witness — you! I am already acquainted with many who make no scruple of drawing my husband from me; but Emillie de Lammenais! — Oh, my God! it is too horrible!"

She seemed to writhe in the agony of this thought: tossing her arms wildly, winding them about her head, staggering as if she would fall.

"The girl told me you could confirm this to me," she continued, calming herself suddenly.

"What have you to say?" I had been sitting, cold and pale with emotion; the presence of her mighty sorrow seemed to paralyse me; I clasped my hands and bowed my head; I felt as if sinking beneath all this distress and shame.

"It is true, then?" she shrieked. Such a strange, wailing, almost unearthly cry, accompanied her words, that I looked up in terror. She was on her knees, clasping the back of a chair with both her white arms, beating her head against it. I went up to her and bent down, and threw my arms about her neck, but she took no notice of me, and continued tossing about in her agonising grief, so that we frequently nearly fell together. The poor, distracted head! how recklessly she dashed it against anything that came in her way!

In tones, now moaningly low and heart-rending to hear, now fierce with all the violence of her soul's indignation, she poured forth impassioned words, forgeting perhaps that she was not alone.

"My children! my poor children! neglected, hated for their mother's sake!—my noble, tender Ernest—my beautiful Louise—my fair-haired little Marie, with her loving heart! Oh, God! why were these given to me?—And this man, whom I have loved so well, he sees and knows it, and he treats me with the cold indifference, the silent contempt, that leave no chance, no hope of change

But thou, O God, that seest my wrongs, wilt avenge me! What is there that I have not suffered at his hands?—outrage in my home, scorn in the world, all my hopes crushed, all my affections blighted, all my feelings worn down by this slavery of insult and grief! Is not this too cruel, oh, my Father, from whom nothing is hidden?—have I not more than I can bear?"

The very exhaustion of her struggles, bodily and mental, at length calmed her; but there seemed no effort in her to rise from the posture she was in. I still bent over her and my tears fell fast.

"I am wearily punished!" she said, lifting her pale, haggard face, and regarding me with her burning eyes. "If this was only a dream and no reality, it would still be too bitter. You seem to feel for me, and I thank you, but leave me now. I too will leave this place, full of pollutions. I will no longer struggle for that which is impossible; I will devote myself to my children and we will console one another—we who are hated so unnaturally!"

"Allow me to help you," I said, still bending over her. She gently put my arm away.

"You will not," she continued, "tell them of this up yonder—not now—not till I have had time to reach the home of my children? I ask this."

"Neither now nor at any time will I mention

what I have seen and heard to these people," I said.

"God bless you!" said the marquise. "You are young; God preserve you from trial like mine! Don't fancy you can help me otherwise than by leaving me to myself. I must be alone before I can rouse myself. Go, go!"

There was evidently nothing better that I could do for her. I arose in silence, unlocked the door and closed it after me. The Comtesse de Reuilly seized upon me, and was offended because I had nothing to communicate. After another weary hour I entered the carriage with mademoiselle de Lammenais, and we drove home.

I now understood the meaning of a gravity, sometimes amounting to sadness, that I had observed in mademoiselle de Lammenais for the last three weeks. I was very glad that this fit was upon her during our drive, so that she did not speak, and that upon our arrival at the hôtel she hastily bade me good night, and dismissed me. I not only could not feel any sympathy for her just then, but, fresh as I was from witnessing the grief of the injured marquise, I was sure that my indignation would find a vent some way. M. de Beausset was altogether a minor consideration; indeed, this inevitable separation of the two was so far a happiness for both, because they were unsuited to each other, and

they knew it, and they could only have been made wretched together by an indissoluble tie. I, who had never been restrained in the expression of my feelings by conventional rules, wondered how I should be able to meet mademoiselle de Lammenais again without giving her some intimation of what I thought and felt. I was quite determined not to go out with her again; and, altogether, it seemed probable that I should have to provide myself with another home. These thoughts kept me long awake, but I was sleeping when Maraude came to my bedside, and asked me to get up and go to the comtesse, who thought she was dying. I went to her, and found her, as usual, more terrified than really ill; but the physician and father Dessalle were sent for, and we remained up with her. The morning was far advanced when the physician arrived, and after pronouncing that the comtesse was not in any danger, he drew me out of the room, and told me that a horrible affair had occurred during the night,—the Marquise de Pauvenay had been found murdered in her apartment, and the marquis was arrested on suspicion of being the murderer.

I cannot well describe the way in which I received this news. So many horrors coming upon me at once seemed to freeze up my faculties. I wandered about during many hours, doing things

mechanically, hearing a great deal about this murder that had excited the whole population of Paris, and saying little. I was first roused by the comtesse asking me to communicate these tidings to her granddaughter, who had not yet been disturbed. I shuddered, and declared myself unequal to the task, which was then committed to Maraude. As she went out of the room the comtesse dispatched me to fetch something for her out of the drawing-room. I found M. de Beausset there; he approached me, and held out his hand.

"You look pale and ill," he said; "you have heard of this great misery? Ah! how dreadful it is!"

I had not had time to reply when a terrible shriek from Emillie's chamber reached us. I snatched my hand from his, and hastened to this new scene of terror. Mademoiselle de Lammenais was in strong convulsions, and the physician, who had only lately quitted the house, was again sent for. I felt now for this poor girl, for I knew that her agony had repentance in it. Hers was not a nature to persevere in wilful sin, of which the consequences were so awful, and I felt that her sufferings would be great. For many hours she seemed hovering between life and death, and during that time I never left her. When consciousness and comparative calmness

returned, she shrank away from me, and desired to be left with her own maid. It was on the third day after this when mademoiselle de Lammenais, who had not yet been able to leave her bed, requested an interview with M. de Beausset. They were together nearly an hour, and when he left her he quitted the house. The comtesse, with whom I was now altogether confined, complained loudly of the trouble occasioned by this indisposition of her granddaughter, until informed by father Dessalle that it was mademoiselle de Lammenais's intention to enter a convent, and devote the remainder of her days to the service of God. This was, at first, a great surprise and shock to her, and it seemed for the moment to rouse her out of her selfishness. She was, however, too much under the influence of the priests to persevere in any decided resistance of this, to her, strange determination. As mademoiselle de Lammenais continued too ill to leave her room, and the comtesse had an idea that it would kill her to move out of her own, which she rarely did, the two did not meet until the day on which the unhappy Emillie quitted her home for the last time.

A fortnight elapsed, and M. de Beausset had never been near the house. It seemed certain that mademoiselle de Lammenais had confessed

her sin to him, and I knew what he must feel at this degradation of one whom he had once loved. Oh that every woman, before stooping to dishonour, would seriously consider the shame that she is heaping upon others of her sex, whether connected with her or not; the infamy, whose shadow spreads a wide darkness apart from all the sorrow; the example of weakness, of which vice is always ready to take advantage; the indelible stigma upon which it thrives, and which furnishes a theme for its godless wit! Why will not woman be true to herself, knowing how this truth would help to regenerate the world?

I suppose it was the fault of my education that made me feel as if I should be ashamed to look in M. de Beausset's face again. I felt implicated in this dishonour: I said to myself,—Why should any of us be trusted, weak, and trivial, and imbecile, and unprincipled, and wanting in self-respect, as so many are? All this distressed me, apart from any other causes of distress.

Mademoiselle de Lammenais quitted the house without seeing me again. She, however, left a note for me, in which I found these words:—

"MARGUERITE,

"I have not kept faith with M. de Beausset, and I have proved to him the

impossibility of our union. He loves you, and you are worthy of him. Do not refuse to make him happy, if only for the sake of

"EMILLIE DE LAMMENAIS."

Poor Emillie! she did not yet understand how many obstacles to happiness there are in this world. Nothing was more impossible than my union with M. de Beausset. Should I also have to endure the trial of proving this impossibility to him?

The Comtesse de Reuilly and other visitors brought us from time to time all the particulars respecting the murder that had been collected, with perhaps a good deal of intelligence that was imaginary. Many ladies were mentioned as being rendered inconsolable, not by the dreadful end of the poor marquise, but by the danger threatening the reputed murderer; and many anecdotes were related respecting the intrigues in which he had been engaged. If suspicion had ever rested upon Emillie, it of course was not to be repeated in the hôtel de Lammenais; but when I was given to understand that the dress and office of a sister of mercy were considered very convenient for the carrying on of an intrigue, I remembered that mademoiselle de Lammenais had frequently gone out in the habit at night, and alone. The teaching of her grandmother,

and the example of others, had prepared for her the way to this sin, whose punishment in her case was so heavy.

With regard to the murder itself and the murderer, who was shortly afterwards executed, full particulars respecting both are to be found in the French chronicles of the time to which I am referring. A sudden change in my own affairs compelled me to put aside for a season my interest in others.

I had met once at the convent, and frequently at the hôtel de Lammenais, a M. l'Abbé Roullett, who had laboured with father Dessalle for my spiritual advancement. I had nothing to dislike in this man beyond a bold look, which was perhaps natural to him, and which was only to be borne on the supposition that he could not help it. This abbé was more indulgent than father Dessalle, who evidently grew out of patience with my stubborn resistance of ghostly help in the matter of my conscience. The abbé would laugh at my sometimes freely-expressed opinions, and call me his "little sinner," in a way that greatly encouraged me to sin on. And, widely as I had separated myself from the truth of God, I was not made of the stuff that can be moulded into any shape. I could put the idea of religion away from me, altogether, as a delusive invention of man, but I could not consent to assist in

making a farce of it, pretending belief in what only excited my ridicule, acquiescences in what roused my indignation. It had evidently become a question with these people what they were to do with me, and I wondered why they would not leave me to myself.

CHAPTER IX.

MADEMOISELLE DE LAMMENAIS had only been gone four days, when the comtesse intimated to me that I might assist her in a very important matter. She had an estate and château in Lombardy, in the latter of which were several valuables that she wished to remove to Paris. Her granddaughter, she said, had intended to have superintended this work, and that being now impossible, she did not know whom to trust except myself. She would supply me with money, and Annette for a companion, and such instructions as I should not mistake. I was also to be accompanied by Baptiste, who would attend to all the arrangements of travelling.

I accepted this commission very eagerly. Paris was becoming oppressive to me on many accounts, and the idea of a long journey, during which I should be my own mistress, besides seeing so

much that was new to me, was quite captivating. Preparations were therefore immediately set on foot, and in less than a week I commenced my journey to Lombardy.

We travelled in our own carriage, with post-horses, to which, as to our accommodation at night when we did not travel through the night, Baptiste attended. I did not count the days, for every day brought some new object of interest before me. The scenery of Switzerland delighted me, and I enjoyed by anticipation the pleasure of exploring an old château in one of the provinces of the south. I was in high spirits when we at length reached this place, a not very sightly building, half in ruins, situated in a solitary but fertile spot, and in sight of the river Aidge. It was a pleasurable excitement to put up with the rude accommodation we found, for there was no appearance of our having been expected. A very old man and his wife had charge of the château, and besides having nothing to offer us except their own poor fare, there was such a bustle to make the rooms fit for me to enter, that I proffered my own services to help; and, to her great disgust, called upon Annette to do the same. We were fairly beaten altogether in effecting much on the day of our arrival. There were several rooms furnished in a heavy, old-fashioned style, but a century's dust seemed to have settled

upon everything, and it was as much as we could do to make one bed-room habitable for Annette and myself. Here, however, we slept soundly, and on the following morning I arose with fresh spirit to pursue my task.

I was struck more than I had been on the previous day with the dilapidation and nakedness of the place. If there was anything valuable, it was as yet out of sight; and it seemed odd that portable valuables should have been left so long in such insecure custody. I, however, did not doubt that all was right, and before opening my sealed instructions, I assisted Annette and the two old custodiers of the place in making one of the sitting-rooms habitable.

It was a very large apartment, scantily furnished with high-backed chairs, and couches, and marble-topped tables, that we thus attempted to reduce to order. In the midst of our labour Annette threw herself despairingly into a seat.

"You surely don't intend to stop long in this place, mademoiselle Marguerite?" she said. "Why not look for the treasures at once, if there are any; but I don't believe it. My young lady never mentioned such a thing; never spoke of coming here; and I'm sure she would have done if she'd thought about it. You see what there is here; I believe it's all a trick."

I was startled; for I remembered that my re-

moval had been recommended by the priesthood. I cast one blank look round me, and then hastened to my bed-room, and broke open my letter of instructions which Baptiste had carried, and which he had only given me that morning. I found it to contain the following sentence, and nothing more:—

"The treasure I send you to seek is the true faith, which that you may find and value properly is the prayer of your friend

"L. DE L."

I was trapped, then. I could still make nothing of it. I seemed at liberty to run away if I liked, and I was not without money. I returned to the room to look for Annette, and she was gone. I descended to the apartment occupied by Bianca and Andrea, and the old man pointed out to me the carriage of the comtesse, rolling away in the distance. I laboured under the disadvantage of not understanding the language of these people, but I knew well enough from their gestures that both Annette and Baptiste had left me.

I was indignant, but I still did not feel any great alarm, though, when I cast my eyes round the country, I saw no other habitation in sight. Feeling the necessity of collecting my thoughts and doing something, I went up stairs again, and

sat down and reflected. I had brought everything belonging to me with me; the comtesse had recommended this, as she said I should be detained in Lombardy some time. I saw nothing better for it than to set out seeking my fortune again with such things as I could carry. I could run faster than either of those two old people, therefore there was no fear of my being detained. I was about going up to my bed-room, previous to putting this plan into execution, when on turning round I was startled by the appearance of M. l'Abbé Roullett.

This man, who was upwards of forty, regarded me with a more than usually bold and repulsive look.

"You see we are not inclined to give you up, Marguerite," he said; "by fair means or by foul, you must belong to us. For my part I am quite ready to consult your own happiness and interest, as I shall prove to you."

"You are beginning in a singular way," I said, "separating me from those who might have protected me, dragging me into a strange country by a fraud."

"Oh, merely a pious fraud," said the abbe. "Mother Church allows a latitude in cases like yours, and you shall find me still more indulgent to yourself. You laugh at what you call our mummeries—well, you shall laugh on, Mar-

guerite, and I will laugh with you. They *are* mummeries; but he who knows it amongst these people, and who can make his own use of the knowledge, is possessed of a power mighty enough to move nations. You shall participate in this power, Marguerite; you have a bold, free spirit; you were born to rise in the world, and you *shall* rise."

I had not really feared this man till I heard him thus avow his contempt of the creed he professed. Religionless as I was myself, I could place no trust in any man, a comparative stranger to me, who boasted of his freedom from religious restraint. I shrank more than ever from the abbé's bold and now triumphant look.

"You have not read me aright." I said. "If I crave for power it is the power of doing good, not of perpetuating evil. Nothing you could say or do would engage me in this work. I feel ashamed of my connexion with your church altogether. I here renounce it altogether."

"Here! Do you know where you are—that you are in my power entirely—that you cannot escape me? Marguerite, listen to me and don't be a fool. You are a brave girl, and I admire you; upon my soul, I love you as I never loved woman. I wish to share the fortune of my life with you. Be reasonable, and listen to what I have to say."

"Ah, my God!" I exclaimed, recoiling in

horror, "you are a mockery, then, altogether, you and your religion—all, all!"

"Yes, all if you will have it so. What is it that appals you now? Don't you understand that every cardinal in Italy has a mistress? Bah! why shouldn't they? I wouldn't change you with any one of them. But mind, I am not used to be thwarted, and this pretty affectation of heroic virtue won't pass with me. Do you know this?"

He drew forth my grandfather's pocket Bible, which I imagined to be safe in my trunk. It must have been abstracted on the road. I had always congratulated myself on having kept it safe from observation, both at the convent and at the hôtel de Lammenais; for, besides the written names of my grandfather and all his family, including myself, it contained the name of my native city.

"I first saw this in the convent at Lille," continued the abbé. "I abstracted from it the information I needed, and every particular of your birth and connexions was known before you were consigned to your relative, the Comtesse de Lammenais. The Church was in need of spirits at once earnest and bold, and you were originally designed to assist in carrying on the conversions in England. You are aware how you turned rusty upon our hands. Well, whilst discomfiting others you captivated me. You must be aware that you can maintain no reputable place in the

world where your history is known. Being illegitimate you are an outcast by birth, and the crime of your grandfather (whether he is guilty or not is no matter) makes you doubly so. I like you all the better, Marguerite, for these disadvantages, which others would use for your condemnation. I will teach you how to trample upon the neck of this world, that would crush you down with its conventionalism, meaning nothing but the caprice of petty and inglorious power. You shall rule, Marguerite, instead of being ruled; I will show you in what you may become absolute."

I had fallen low enough now. If there was anything in me superior to that stigma of birth in spite of it—if I, indeed, possessed a soul and an inheritance apart from this earthly identity with more of evil and degradation than earth could tolerate, this was the time to show it. From that bold, bad man, I felt myself driven back upon God, and I took my stand as confidently as if I had never doubted or questioned God's power.

"I have heard you on compulsion," I said "and we are so far upon an equality that you are compelled to hear me. I loathe, I detest, I abhor you! I throw back your insinuations and your offers alike with scorn! You dare to look on me, judging what I am—speculating on what I am not! I am fresher from the hand of God than you are, and I wield a mightier power—the power

of discerning what is iniquitous, and repelling it! You have my answer, let me pass."

"Gently!" said the abbé, putting himself in my way. "You have not heard all that it is essential you should know. In these dominions you are liable to be prosecuted for being found in possession of a Bible. That prosecution means perpetual imprisonment or death. You are even more of an offender than this: you have tried to aid the escape from her vows of a novitiate in the convent at Lille, named Clémence, by conveying a letter for her; and this crime alone makes you liable to a fearful punishment. I hold the fiat in my hands; I can denounce you at any hour."

"Denounce me!" I said; "anything will be preferable to being here and near you!"

"Oh! can you be so scornful, mistress?" he said, seizing my hands, and grasping them so that I had no power of release. "There!" he continued, flinging them from him, "go to your room, and remember that even in physical power I am your superior!"

My superior, indeed, in the latter! I rushed to my room with a new horror upon me. I sought to lock my door, but there was no key. Presently I heard some one come to the door and fasten it outside, and I felt that I was a prisoner.

Then I fell upon my knees, and prayed. I had never contemplated situations in which my own

power would not help me. I turned to God, because I could no longer rely upon myself, and there was the consciousness in my own soul that abashed and humbled me. I thought of my grandfather in his tribulations, sustained by his unwavering trust. How little I had profited by the pious instructions of my childhood and youth!

Whilst I was thus partially drawn to God, I still had a determined reliance upon myself. I took from one of my boxes a pair of sharp-pointed scissors, and hid them in my dress. I thought far less of murdering that man, in an extremity, than of killing a fly, for in this smaller matter I had every inclination to be humane. It was another thing to be *human*, and to battle with the outrages of earth.

I examined my window, as other prisoners have done, but to no purpose. I could not even break my neck out of it, for it would not open. I could entertain no hope of escaping the vigilance of which the abbé had given me such convincing proofs; nothing was to be expected from his generosity or sense of justice, and everything to be feared from the brute force, even more congenial to his nature, than *finesse*. As so much seemed to be known to him, he had probably seen the expediency of removing me out of the reach of M. de Beausset. He — the kind and

the noble — where was he? did he ever dream of me by day or night? did he miss me? These thoughts would come upon me, even in the midst of my terrible distress, and though I knew that we could never be anything to each other.

I was left to such reflections as I had during many hours. At length my door was opened, and a dark-complexioned woman, of about thirty years of age, entered, bringing me some refreshment. I was in the sort of state that urged me to appeal to almost anything bearing about it the impress of humanity; but there was something in the appearance of this woman that kept me silent. I had been a witness of the spiritual slavery of those who are yet allowed a wide latitude in the world; she gave me the idea of this entire subjection, in the absence of every individual desire, or hope, or satisfaction in life. Her face was less animated than that of a galvanised corpse. Her complete spiritual abjectness and worldly indifference seemed to have locked up her faculties, so that there was nothing to appeal to; and the seal of an inflexibility, at once passionless and cruel, was set upon her thin lips. She was the living representative of a creed, essentially dead, which commands obedience to the literal word enjoining hatred of father and mother, brother and sister, if need be; perfect apathy and passiveness in the execution of its

decrees. What I had seen already enabled me thus to comprehend this woman, from whom I had no hope; and driven as I was to God, I still took exceptions to the Christianity that brought forth no better fruits.

The appearance of this woman led me to believe that I was to remain imprisoned where I was, but I was mistaken. At a later hour she returned, and told me in French that M. l'Abbé Roullett wished to speak with me in the apartment where I had before seen him. I went to him as calmly as I could outwardly, with all my faculties so intensely on the alert.

"I hope I see you in a better temper, Marguerite," he said, with a mingled expression of ferocity and gratified malice. "It is hard to teach you what is right, but we must try. To-night you will have to take another journey, therefore prepare yourself. You are going to Vienna, and you must see that though I could detain you here if I liked, I am able to pursue my schemes amid crowds and in open daylight. This is all I have to say to you; and now you may go and prepare yourself."

There was something particularly insolent in this summons merely to receive an imperative order that might have been conveyed to me in another manner. With all his knowledge of human nature, the abbé was mistaken in sup-

posing that he could subdue me by this means, which only made me the more determined to resist. This prospect of going to Vienna rejoiced me; I thought that in a crowded city I should have the chance of making my situation known, and obtaining redress. For the present, therefore, I could afford to refrain myself; I heard him in silence, and returned to my room.

It was late at night — a beautiful summer night — when the woman of whom I have spoken, and Andrea, came to fetch my boxes and to summon me down stairs. I found a carriage in the court-yard of the château, with two horses and a postilion. The abbé himself helped to mount my boxes, and in helping me into the carriage gave my hand a forced and odious squeeze. The woman followed me, and the abbé seated himself outside. Then we drove off.

The carriage blinds were down, and when I attempted to raise one of them the woman forbade me, in a peremptory tone. I sank into a corner of the carriage, and continued my bitter reflections. I would not yet believe that there were any circumstances of life in which courage and resolution might be rendered availless, and I determined to be on the watch for any opportunity that might occur for effecting my release. But it was yet the dead of the night, and there was blank silence round me. When the sun rose

and streamed through the windows we were still hurrying on at a rapid pace. At length the carriage stopped.

I lifted the blind before my companion could prevent me and looked out. There was a wide, fertile country, and a solitary house, at which we were changing horses. I dashed my hand through the glass of the window and cut it, and screamed aloud.

"Parbleu! what have we here?" said a strange man's voice.

"Let her alone!" shouted the abbé; "she is a heretic, one that has been convicted of trying to effect the escape of a nun. I am answerable for conveying her to Vienna."

"Ah! that is another matter," said the man, and there was silence again.

Silence without; but I wrestled with my companion in the coach, and broke the window again, and called out louder, and asked to be heard. The abbé opened the coach-door.

"You had better be quieter here," he said, "before I subject you to greater restraint. You see how obstinate this heretic is," he continued, appealing to those outside; "I shall be glad to get her out of my hands."

I caught a glimpse of a comely young woman, who seemed to be looking on with much curi-

osity. I called out to her, and said that the charge against me was false.

"Holy Virgin!" she exclaimed; "what a wretch! See how she persists in her sin!"

"You see you will gain nothing by this conduct," said my companion. "Why don't you be quiet?" The coach-door was at the moment dashed to, and we drove off again.

I sank back in the carriage, more helplessly than before. I had not taken into my consideration that I was in a land of bigots, who would sanction any cruelty practised upon a heretic; that I was amongst slaves who dared not, if they would, resist the mandates of the Church. In spite of my bravery, large tears filled my eyes, and rolled unheeded down my cheeks. I began to think more kindly of England. Oh, I exclaimed, mentally, if I could find myself there once more — there where, at least, I could suffer no oppression like this!

We continued to roll on for hours. There were provisions in the carriage, which my companion asked me to partake of; but I turned away with loathing. I felt myself becoming really ill, and this terrified me more. At length, a sudden backward movement in the carriage, as if it was about to be overthrown, and the report of a pistol, roused me.

"Don't attempt to parley with me, villain as you are!" exclaimed a voice that I knew well; "look to yourself, for at my hands you may expect no mercy!"

The carriage-door was burst open, and M. de Beausset held out his arms towards me. I sprung forward, and fell into them, and clung to him. Oh, how much I forgot in that instant of time!

"My beloved!" he said, clasping me close to him, "fear nothing; I am with you, and you are safe!"

The second report of a pistol roused me. M. de Beausset staggered. A shot had entered his side and the blood gushed over me. I shrieked and looked round. José had just wrenched the murderous weapon out of the abbé's hand, and was beating him about the head and shoulders with it. Jean, M. de Beausset's servant, was wrestling with the postilion. I called to them, but before they came M. de Beausset fell.

I knelt down beside him and tore off my shawl, and asked them to bind it round him. This was done, but the blood still flowed freely.

"Never mind me," said M. de Beausset. "You know what to do, Jean;—convey Mademoiselle Payne from this spot instantly—drive for your life!"

"I will not leave you in this extremity," I

said, clasping his hand and bathing it with my tears. "Where can we get help?"

"That 's what I want to know," said José. "Ah, you villain!" he continued, turning to the postilion, "can you stand there and see a gentleman die? There 's a town only a mile off: monsieur must be driven there at once."

All this time Jean was lamenting over his master, who vainly commanded him to take charge of me; the abbé lay upon the ground stunned, and apparently insensible; and the woman kept her seat in the carriage.

"You dare to disobey me, Jean; and you are killing me!" said M. de Beausset. "Will you attend to what I have said? José, look to this — be quick!"

Jean seemed paralysed with grief.

"Come, mademoiselle," said José, "you are doing monsieur no good. Here 's a carriage we've brought, and you must get into it."

"For God's sake, Marguerite!" said M. de Beausset. "If they get you to Vienna you are lost! Jean, is this your fidelity? José, where are you? Marguerite!—save, save her!" A sinking paleness overspread his face — he had fainted.

I thought he was dead. I, too, became unconscious, and when sense returned I found myself lying on the floor of a carriage, my

head resting upon the seat. I was driven along at a rapid rate, and events came back to me painfully, with an agonising rush, like that of the blood when circulation has been stopped. I still believed that M. de Beausset was dead—that he had died to save me—and I, who might not have been allowed to live *for*, writhed under the agonised thought of living on in the world *without* him. I could have borne to leave him; but that he should so leave me!

I felt sick unto death: for, besides the agony of my mind, I had tasted no food since the previous day, and now it was late in another day. I felt revived, however, when the carriage at length stopped to change horses, and Jean appeared at the door and assured me, in answer to my first eager inquiry, that we had not left M. de Beausset for dead; that José remained with him, and that there was hope of his recovery. He told me I might rest a few minutes, and I entered the small inn before which we were stopping and partook of some refreshment. Then he explained to me that he was provided with a passport, describing me as an English lady travelling to Paris, and that I must answer to this description at the frontier town which we were approaching. All went on well, and we travelled day and night. We had entered France, when one day the car-

riage stopped, and Luce and one of the gipsy-men came with Jean to the carriage-door.

"Mademoiselle has been inquired for by a gentleman who is stopping yonder with our people," said Luce. "He says she belongs to him, and he is going further to seek her."

"I have my instructions from master about mademoiselle," said Jean, "and I must obey them. What is to be done?"

I questioned Luce and her companion about the appearance of the gentleman, and no doubt remained in my mind that it was Uncle Stephen. I hesitated,—not with any thought of avoiding him, who had journeyed so far to seek me, but I was violently agitated, and when I alighted from the carriage I was compelled to lean upon Luce for support. We were on an open road, surrounded by trees, and nothing more met my view as I looked apprehensively round.

"I am answerable for mademoiselle's safety," said Jean. "I don't like the look of this: we had better drive on."

I was asking Luce how far the encampment of her people was off, when I saw her companion, whom I had not missed, emerging from the trees close beside me. He was accompanied by another, and—ah! how did we two meet! I remember sobbing upon Uncle Stephen's neck, and that he held me with a strong grasp.

"My poor child!" he said, "you have suffered, and you have made us suffer. Oh, you have wrung our hearts, Margaret! But that is past, and I have good news for you."

"I dare not ask for news," I said, without lifting my head.

"You do not deserve to be allowed to ask for anything," said Uncle Stephen. "I will tell you. Aunt Betsy is with God, and I and George attended her to the grave—not a pauper grave, Margaret. Your grandfather is proved to be innocent, and he will return to England if you and I do not rather join him where he is."

I lifted my head now. "Oh, bless God for him!" I exclaimed.

"Amen! bless God for all things!" said uncle Stephen, lifting his hat reverently. "This is all I shall tell you now; let me understand how you are situated."

We had been speaking in English, but I called Jean to us, and in French gave an account of my rescue by M. de Beausset. Jean corroborated what I said, in his own way, and expressed great anxiety to return to his master.

"He must be a good master to inspire such affectionate attachment as yours," said Uncle Stephen; "a good man to have performed so meritorious an action. You shall return to him, and bear him my thanks, and an assurance that

mademoiselle Margaret is safe and with her friends. We are two miles distant from the next post town,—you can, perhaps, convey us thither?"

To this Jean gladly consented. My old acquaintances, the gipsies, had gathered round us in large numbers; and as I turned to take leave of them, I briefly acquainted Uncle Stephen with my obligations to José and the rest. He took from his purse, and gave to be distributed amongst them, a quantity of gold and silver, whose amount quite appalled me. In his joy at my restoration, Uncle Stephen was indulging in one of the fits of extravagant generosity which his means would not bear. When I held out my hand to Morgotte, who amongst others had been eagerly listening to Jean's narrative, she indignantly dashed it aside.

"You could leave him to die!" she exclaimed; "you that have brought him to this! He will find, at last, that the despised Egyptian girl loved him best! I scorn you for this while I rejoice!"

Morgotte's love for M. de Beausset, like every human passion that is genuine and fully developed, had a power in it that commanded attention, if not respect. This outburst of her feelings made me for an instant quail, and look little in comparison; but I had to deal with realities, and

wish what I might, and suffer what I might, there was only one certain course for me to pursue.

While it was satisfying to my own love and my gratitude to know that I had forgotten my danger in his, and that I had only left him involuntarily, I felt that our separation was right, and necessary for the peace of both. Love him more than ever I did, and my anxiety about him was an agony to me; but I prayed that we might never meet again, and I believed that the sorrow, whose very intensity served to sustain me, would eventually impart to my character the stability and quiet that would better fit me for the battle of life.

When we arrived at the next town Uncle Stephen wrote a letter of thanks to M. de Beausset, which he committed to Jean's charge. He also gave to the latter his address in London, and desired to be made acquainted with his master's situation; but when he offered money, Jean respectfully declined it. He said his instructions had been to convey me to Antwerp, to a Madame Schomberg, a cousin of M. de Beausset's, who was a married lady and a Protestant, and in whose house I should have found a safe asylum.

We dismissed Jean with thanks, and did not resume our journey till the next day. As we sat together in the evening, Uncle Stephen entered further into the particulars of what had occurred

during my absence. His sister was dead, and George had gone out to Australia, taking with him young Henry Elliott.

"George drooped very much after you first left us," said Uncle Stephen; "but eventually your example, or the contents of your letter, which the dog would never show me, seemed to rouse him to exertion. Where he is, I have full confidence that he will rise in the world, and feel happier in himself."

I had asked Uncle Stephen how he contrived to trace me.

"Thereby hangs a tale," he replied. "You must wait for a full explanation till we arrive in London. Thus much, however, I can tell you. When I was first furnished with the knowledge that you had proceeded to France, I made what haste I could to Calais, where you were remembered through the circumstance of having lost a purse. I was directed to a mother Meulen, who gave me a vast deal of information. Through her I was enabled to trace you to Clerons; thence in company with the gipsies to Mouscron and Lille; to the convent, and to the hôtel de Lammenais. I proceeded instantly to Paris; but the Comtesse de Lammenais declared that you had left her, and that she did not know where you could be found. Then I made inquiries about the country for the gang of gipsies, and met with

them yesterday night. They told me that you had been entrapped away, and that a certain M. de Beausset had gone to your rescue. I had intended to follow in the wake of this M. de Beausset, when I fortunately met with you. Here is material for a marvellous story, and I shall expect you to narrate it to me faithfully."

And faithfully I did narrate it, entering into my feelings of various kinds; my inclination to become a Roman Catholic till the absurdities of that religion drove me back, before I had been quite revolted by the mockeries and the oppressions which it sanctions. If I touched lightly on the attachment of M. de Beausset, Uncle Stephen did not seem to require much enlightenment from me upon the subject.

"Ah, I always feared George was not the right individual for you," he said, smiling. "Never mind, it is all ending right. M. de Beausset is a fine, generous-hearted fellow, who seems to act as if he had the fear of God before his eyes. He is, too, I understand, noble in birth, and possessed of some wealth; minor considerations, yet of importance as the world goes. But I chiefly rejoice, Margaret (by the bye, I ought to have scolded you first, and I am forgetting that); I chiefly rejoice because you have not been enthralled by the errors of this church, to which you felt an inclination to attach yourself. This has

spared another, as well as myself, a large amount of anguish, knowing as we do that in the most important of all matters we have equally neglected you through the past."

My wonder might have been excited as to who this "other" was. I saw that a great spiritual change had been wrought in Uncle Stephen; he had become a humble and earnest follower of Christ, and he looked back with horror upon the unbelief of his past life. It was easier to tell me all this, than to work in myself the change I yet needed. I did not feel any absorbing interest in the matter; and, both with respect to myself and him, I was willing to let much rest without further inquiry. The two circumstances that alone made any great impression upon me were the proving of my grandfather's innocence, the particulars of which I was yet to learn, and Uncle Stephen's wish to go out to Australia. Speaking as he had done of M. de Beausset, seemed to tear open the many wounds of my heart; and I hoped that, without any necessity for my recurring to the subject, I should be able to turn the current of Uncle Stephen's thoughts.

I remained in possession of my own small property, Jean having, in the midst of all the confusion, transferred my boxes to M. de Beausset's carriage. I thought I had a right to keep the small sum supplied to me by the Comtesse de

Lammenais, and which had been considerably diminished during my journey to Lombardy. This, with what I had in my box, seemed sufficient to defray the expenses of a passage to Australia, and to Australia all my thoughts now turned. I still retained my horror of either renewing my struggle for existence in England, or remaining a burden upon Uncle Stephen. I, however, reserved what I had to say until we arrived in England, for I did not yet feel myself safe from the machinations of the priests.

CHAPTER X.

I QUITTED France at the close of the month of August, and I had been absent from England eleven months. Uncle Stephen travelled post from Dover, and we arrived in London at night. My curiosity was inevitably roused by finding myself in a private dwelling, furnished with considerable elegance, though rather with a view to comfort than luxury, and the seeming mistress of which was introduced to me by the name of Mrs. Delamere. She was not more than thirty-six years of age, mild and pleasant in her manner—to me, even affectionate.

"Poor child!" she said, drawing me towards her, and kissing me,—"how I rejoice over you! We have had you in our thoughts and prayers a long time."

This address puzzled me still more, but I let it pass. I was next introduced to Mr. Dela-

mere,—a quiet, gentlemanly personage,—who received me with the same unpretending kindness. We four took a light supper together, during which we were attended by a man-servant in plain clothes. I remarked how reverently Uncle Stephen bowed his head during the grace pronounced by Mr. Delamere. Shortly after supper the whole household of servants assembled to join in prayer.

Uncle Stephen first read a portion of the Scripture. He selected that affecting parable of the Prodigal Son, to which my attention had first been seriously drawn by little James Graham. My heart had long been in a stony state with regard to any real religious impression; but there were associations that softened it, as I listened to Uncle Stephen's impressive and fervent delivery of this passage,—of itself God's most touching appeal to sinners such as he had been—such as I was. Uncle Stephen's conversion seemed remarkable, as he had held Christianity in abhorrence, as well as contempt, through a long life. I began to feel curious about the means by which it had been effected.

Mrs. Delamere showed me to my bedroom, the arrangements of which spoke of the same opulence and good taste. I slept heavily, not through any absence of mental pain, for, bear up

bravely as I would, and amidst all that I had to be thankful for, there was a sense of sorrow and desolation about me that I could not shake off. When I awoke in the morning, and looked from the window, I saw that I was in an aristocratic part of the town. I was in a mood to be rather impatient with mysteries; I could not endure repose and uncertainty. I needed action, even to keep up my own courage, under the bitter trial I was compelled to go through, come what would. I was disappointed when I found that Uncle Stephen had gone out, merely leaving me a note, in which he promised to acquaint me with everything in the evening. I was received by Mr. and Mrs. Delamere with the same quiet benignity that had characterised their demeanour the previous night. When the latter and myself were left together, she led me into a large room at the back of the house, that reminded me at once of a draper's shop and a ready-made linen warehouse. A long table, looking very like a counter, was covered with plain and new garments, of all sorts and sizes; and partitions round the walls were filled with flannels, prints, and calicoes.

"I, and a number of other Christian women," said Mrs. Delamere, "employ a portion of our time in making garments for the poor. I expect

some of them immediately, and perhaps you will not mind sitting with us until Mr. Leath's return."

I could not object to this arrangement, though I had no heart in it. I distrusted these demonstrations of philanthropy, that were often the effect of a whim; oftener of a desire to appear well before the world. I was weary and impatient, too, as I have said; and it was not in the power of mortal to make a good Christian of me all at once, and enamour me with this work of love, and chain me down to it.

I was quite determined to take no part in the work—to sit merely, and look on. I would not encourage in any one the idea that it was possible to turn me from my own purpose of leaving England immediately.

Several ladies arrived, to the number of about twelve. They were all quietly attired, all soft-spoken, and unpretending in manner, yet I cannot say that I liked either the manner or the look of some amongst them, for the spirit of the meeting did not sit alike easily and gracefully upon all. There was a devil amongst the twelve apostles; and in any given number of ordinary mortals, I, at least, was not prepared to recognise perfection.

I was introduced severally to these ladies, who all received me with the same air of interest, at

once earnest and gentle, that had characterised Mrs. Delamere herself. It was easier to resolve to sit and do nothing, than to put my plan into execution; but it was the mere weariness of inactivity that at length impelled me to offer my services in the cutting-up department. I, however, became interested in spite of myself. I heard them speak feelingly of widows and orphans, of destitute aged spinsters, and hard-worked, half-starved girls, who were to be benefitted by this work as far as individual benevolence could go. I had seen enough of destitution to believe that this was a good work. We sat from ten till one; and then the meeting broke up, and I was left alone with Mrs. Delamere.

We dined at five o'clock, when Mr. Delamere and Uncle Stephen came in. Afterwards, we two were left alone together.

"You are impatient, I know, Margaret," he said; "but to-night I will keep my word with you. I have yet much to relate that will excite your wonder, and I wish to proceed in a manner most likely to benefit you spiritually: I have prayed for this. You see how great a change has come over myself; I have been allowed to understand that the grace of God is a wonderful thing, that without it we are nothing, humanly or spiritually. In half an hour there will be an assemblage of Christians, who meet here periodi-

cally for the purpose of prayer. I wish you to join us before I enter upon the particulars I have to relate."

I merely signified my acquiescence in this arrangement, and nothing more was said. Uncle Stephen left me to myself for a short time, and I heard many people enter the house. Then he returned to me, and conducted me up stairs. The drawing-room was lighted up, and a large assemblage of people was collected, including Mr. and Mrs. Delamere and the servants of the house. Uncle Stephen led me to a seat behind a chair and table, elevated near the centre of the room. There, with his arms resting upon the table, and his head bowed as if in prayer, knelt a man plainly dressed, whom I supposed to be the preacher. When all seemed to have arrived, he arose and gave out the words of a hymn, which he joined in singing. Then he read a portion of the Scripture, and finally, after another brief interval occupied in silent prayer, he arose and spoke. I could only see the back of his head; but his dark hair, and tall, manly figure, showed him to be in the prime of life. He selected for his text the verse from Isaiah: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." He spoke extempore; one hand placed upon the Bible before him, the other resting in the folds of his coat. His rich, flexible, and

powerful voice, was of itself sufficient to arrest attention; but there was evidently an utterance beyond this from the spirit and the heart, that irresistibly stirred the hearts and the spirits of his hearers. I had never heard anything like it before, and my face flushed and paled by turns as he went on. There seemed to be no situation of life that he did not enter into and probe with a masterly hand,—down, at one moment, into the lowest depths of man's degradation, and apathy, and impotent rebellion; up, the next, into the heights of God's forbearance, and mercy, and fatherly care. He made me feel for the first time that I was entirely in God's hands—helpless in myself. A stubborn pride made me repress the tears that sprung to my eyes, but others were weeping round me; and I at length yielded to the impulse, and wept unrestrainedly. Uncle Stephen was at my side, weeping too; and I thought of my grandfather. I passed through the agony that all must feel who are convicted of sin; and then a holy calm fell upon my spirit. I was prepared for the concluding words of the preacher, who said, speaking of the conversion of sinners, "This is thy work, O Lord Jesus!"

Another hymn was sung, and the meeting broke up. Uncle Stephen led me into a room, where we were alone.

"Oh, Uncle Stephen!" I said, throwing my arms

round his neck; "I have strayed altogether from the right way. Let us go to my grandfather; let us imitate him, and we shall be happy!"

Uncle Stephen returned my embrace with strong emotion. "Bless God!" he exclaimed; "our prayers have been heard! Yes, darling, we will go to your grandfather if you wish it, but first you have much to learn. Sit down now, and listen to me. I was first converted by the man you have just been listening to, who, like me, has been singularly delivered from sin and spiritual darkness by God's mercy. Two months back I heard that a certain personage was busy investigating your grandfather's case at ——. He made discoveries, respecting which he wrote to me, and he inquired earnestly after you. I went to him at ——. I first met him in a poor man's house, where I heard him preach with the same power that he showed to-night; for this, Margaret, was the man. I was strongly prejudiced against him—strongly fortified by my own opinions; but the strength of prejudice and the pride of human reason came to nothing in his hands. He was God's instrument to make me docile as a child. Since then we have acted in concert. He had learned some particulars, which we searched into, and this was the result. The son of David Marples, a boy twelve years old, had, out of curiosity, hid himself in the room

in which the interview betwixt his father and uncle took place. He witnessed it from beginning to end. He averred before the magistrates that the two never approached each other, until his father, in the very moment of an outburst of passion, fell against the fender, displacing in his fall the poker, which fell upon the hearth-rug. Then he saw his uncle run to his father's help, and made his own escape by the side-door by which he had entered. He said he had been ashamed of speaking of this matter, knowing that he had done wrong; but even the conscience of the child would not let him rest after his uncle's condemnation. The man I speak of—the preacher of to-night, remember—was the first to gain intelligence of this evidence, and he had it investigated fully. He had some influence at ——, and he made powerful use of it in your grandfather's behalf. He spoke eloquently of the simplicity of his character—of his blameless life, of his earnest and uniform piety. Men's feelings may be temporarily worked upon for good as well as evil—they have their manias of righteousness; and the very singularity in this case occasioned the population of —— to rise *en masse* in favour of your grandfather. After all, it did not rest with these people to do justice. The evidence furnished by young David Marples was communicated to the Home Secretary, and your

grandfather was declared to be innocent. The ship that is now going out will bear this news to him. I learned from this same personage of whom we are speaking, that you had gone to France, and he was earnest in his wish that I should proceed in search of you. It was his own request that you should meet him to-night as you did."

"But who is he, Uncle Stephen? Ah, I see! he is simply a Christian. Christianity, after all, means doing good."

"Yes, he is a Christian; but to you he is something more. From what you have seen, from what I have told you, can you form no guess at who he is?"

I could only look blankly in Uncle Stephen's face.

"See here, Margaret," he continued; "this man came to me and said,—'Brother, I have offended even you; forgive me!' What could I do? I was myself a convicted sinner before God; I could not say to another,—'I am better than thou!' We are not right when we can persist in making a mockery of the Lord's prayer, 'Forgive us, as we forgive.' You understand this, Margaret?"

"Yes; but why do you so urge it to-night, Uncle Stephen?"

"Because he of whom I am speaking fears to meet you, lest you should recoil from him with

horror. You must remember two things, Margaret—that he is penitent, and that he is your father. I have been talking to you about Colonel Leigh."

I attempted to catch Uncle Stephen's arm as I started up, but he stepped hastily back, and as he went out and closed the door behind him I was aware that I was not alone. Colonel Leigh was standing at a little distance, extending his arms towards me. It was a remnant of the old pride and passion, that at the instant enabled me to bear up as I looked at him. He was wonderfully changed, so that I could hardly have recognised him, face to face as we were, and though the only merely material difference was that he was paler and closely shaved. It was the inward man that exerted this wonderful power over the outward. The proud, bold, indifferent look had departed, and was replaced by a yearning expression of sorrow and humility; the figure, once erect in its animal power, was supple and yielding, and the hand he held towards me shook. The electrical fire that draws spirit to spirit touched me, and I rushed to him.

"Ah, I can comprehend this!" I said. "We are equals in the sight of God, and we can forget our mortality and all the differences of earth!" He held me in a close embrace and kissed my forehead.

"My poor child!" he said, in a voice broken by emotion; "it is God that enables you to turn to me thus, for I have not deserved that you should forgive me! You must bear with me now in another way, for I know that my enormity has been great; and I love greatly, feeling what has been done for me. Bless you, my child! if I did not know that Providence had watched over you I should now be wretched!"

He placed me in a seat beside him and took one of my hands in his.

"The past of our lives has been a blank one to the other, Margaret," he said. "Will you now confide in me, as one anxious only to promote your spiritual and temporal happiness?"

That was an unfortunate speech; for, temporally, I felt that he could do nothing for me: I wished to preserve our spiritual relation apart from everything else. I felt that this man, who was so eager to make atonement for his sin, was destined to share with me the punishment of it.

"Let us not talk of the past," I said; "it wearies me, even while I feel bold to go on into the future. There is only one earthly subject upon which I can dwell: I wish to go to my grandfather—to leave this place."

"And me, Margaret?"

"And you. I leave you in God's hands; I will pray for you. Through the future we can never

be indifferent to each other if we keep the faith. Let us rejoice in this, and in everything else keep silence."

"You oppress me," he said, with a disturbed look. "You are young, and you have a future in the world, which I would provide for. I had a hope that you would point out to me the way of doing this."

Here was the retribution. I was prouder than this man, who had formerly fenced himself about with all the pride of earth. That which appeared to him a possibility was to me a dead blank. In this contention between us, should I be compelled to make him aware of the fact? I remained silent, and he spoke on.

"I have scarcely a right to inquire, yet I should like to learn from yourself the particulars of your sojourn in France. Will the recital be too painful to you, Margaret?"

I replied by narrating all that had happened to me in France.

"I never," said Colonel Leigh, when I had concluded, "felt the same bold, bad confidence, in myself after your visit. I could not put away from me the thought of your wandering, forlorn and friendless, in a foreign land. This restless feeling prepared me for what afterwards happened when coming to Mr. Delamere's prayer-meeting, merely out of curiosity, I left the house a changed

man. But this M. de Beausset, Margaret, who should have married my cousin; he evidently loves me: you cannot be indifferent to him?"

It struck me as a singularity that Colonel Leigh, himself so recently a man of the world, should seriously dwell upon the likelihood of M. de Beausset willingly uniting his fate with mine when made acquainted with all the facts of my life; overlooking the certainty of society's disapprobation and his family's disgust; overcoming his own prejudices, and stifling his inborn sense of what was honourable; or, worse, subjecting himself to a life of after-regret. In our several ways we expect too much from others, and so become finally intolerant.

He had equally overlooked myself, and it seemed odd to have to say to him, "I am too proud to marry this M. de Beausset." I was compelled to say something, therefore I acquainted him with my early determination never to marry. He rested his face upon his hands as I spoke, and remained silent some minutes.

"You have had the advantage of being educated by two honourable and upright men, Margaret," he said, at length, "and you have proved yourself to be brave and incorruptible. Do not let this bravery overwhelm me. I have flattered myself with the hope of being allowed to contribute to your happiness in the future; do not

destroy this hope. I considered myself a poor man three months ago; but I am rich now with my altered habits and tastes. All that I have is yours, Margaret; and, as my acknowledged daughter, you will have a position in the world. Consider how strong is my wish to make atonement; how heavily it is in your power to punish me."

All this distressed me very much, because my own, unalterable resolution, was the sole stay of my life. I was not capable of being drawn from it, and the offer now made was repugnant to me on many accounts. I could only shrink from the idea of remaining in England, and descending to the meanness of seeking, in chance advantages, a meagre pretence of eligibility to the hand and affections of M. de Beausset. If unworthy of him, as I had been, I would remain so, and preserve my own self-respect. I turned from Colonel Leigh to my grandfather as decidedly as I should have turned in that direction from the merest stranger. With all my respect for the Christian I lacked affection for the man. I explained to him, as briefly and inoffensively as possible, my conviction that I could only be happy in the condition in which I was born and educated. If I rose, I must rise of myself. He was considerably depressed by my obstinacy, and afterwards appealed to Uncle Stephen.

Fortunately for the ending of this contention a letter arrived from my grandfather. He spoke of enjoying good health, and of having received much kinder treatment than he could have expected under the circumstances. He wrote by another hand, being now totally blind. He commended us to the keeping of God, spoke of his own strong trust, and concluded by saying that if he were free, and us with him, he should have no wish to return to England.

This letter, and my determination, decided Uncle Stephen to act promptly. He took a passage for us both on board the vessel that was to convey my grandfather's acquittal, and that sailed in three weeks.

Colonel Leigh placed in his hands the sum of two thousand pounds for my benefit, and this I did not refuse. In the meantime he did all in his power to give me pleasure. He began by making Jem (who was still with Uncle Stephen, and who had been rejoiced to see me,) his sole and confidential servant. Colonel Leigh and Jem! There was something wonderful in the power that drew and kept these two together until the death of one of them, and that occasioned Jem to say before I left him, that he never got more life out of anybody than he did out of his new master.

And Colonel Leigh, who now spent the chief part of his income in charities, eagerly entered

into my surviving interest in the unfortunate Susan Lester, and the two children of Mrs. Graham. He accompanied me to the workhouse, where I learned that Ellen was dead. Lilly was brought to us, but I did not know her. She had been disfigured by having, as the woman in charge of her said, accidentally got herself on fire. She seemed to me to be quite idiotic. She had no recollection of me, or of anything in the past. Colonel Leigh promised me that he would place her in an asylum for orphans. Of Susan I could gain no intelligence whatever, as she had disappeared from her former place of residence. I learned strange news of Mr. Bontoft. His wife had run off with Captain Phipps, and he had become niggardly and morose, and had taken his niece, Mrs. Elliott, for a housekeeper. We had a letter from Jean, in which he said that his master was slowly recovering, but that he had not been allowed to see him. He was under the care of his uncle, the Cardinal Caradoni, and Jean feared that some charge was about to be preferred against him by M. l'Abbé Roullett. Colonel Leigh did me the best possible service by promising to proceed immediately to Vienna and inquire into these circumstances, and explain the service rendered to myself, and thank M. de Beausset personally, if possible. I entrusted him with a letter for M. de Beausset from myself.

Upon quitting England finally, I must do it the justice of expressing my belief that nowhere are the precepts of Christ more fully carried out by those imbued with the genuine spirit of Christianity. This is only a poor tribute to the kindness I met at the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Delamere and their friends, and which was constantly and actively exerted for the destitute and unfortunate. This human sympathy in the midst of religious toleration is the true glory of the land. I certainly felt some affection for Colonel Leigh when we parted — perhaps some compunction on his account; he seemed so depressed, so forlorn. I understood from Uncle Stephen that the general, who gave him up as a madman, and lady Leigh and her daughters, who considered that he was disgracing the family, and the dean, who protested that his new views and habits were derogatory to the dignity of the Church, were all estranged from him. He was made to pay the penalty of forsaking the world and following Christ, but he was borne up to the end.

It wanted just three weeks of my eighteenth birthday when I and Uncle Stephen took a final leave of our friends and England. I was not free from heart-ache during the voyage, though I did not regret the step I had taken. I was violently, and for ever, wrenching myself away from one whom I loved with my whole soul: I

was leaving him in circumstances of danger and of bodily suffering, all incurred on my account. In the midst of this conflict, however, I was aware of the presence of more mental quiet than I had known during the last three years. Young as I was, I had been sobered by experience and suffering; my faith in God was no longer wavering; and I knew that, unless the heart could brave sorrow, the spirit's courage to persevere in right was availless. I had lost, too, the restless consciousness of being impelled irresistibly on by some power superior to my own will, toward what I knew not. I could understand and feel that, in gaining Christ, I had accomplished the end and object of my being.

I shall not attempt to describe our meeting with my grandfather, nor the effect upon him of the news we brought, further than to say that the dear, blind old man, was temperate in his joy, as he had been firm and uncomplaining under wrong and sorrow. We proceeded together from Sydney to Melbourne, where Uncle Stephen learned from a gentleman to whom George had been furnished with a letter of introduction the address of the latter, near two hundred miles off, in the heart of Australia Felix. George had seen my grandfather, and had written home by a ship that passed us.

Leaving me and my grandfather very comfortably settled at Melbourne, Uncle Stephen set out alone for George's station, intending to purchase another farm for us and himself. In the course of two months he and George came to fetch us.

I was pleased to see the latter treat me with the frank and brotherly affection that I had formerly told him I should prize, and I expected no less from him; for George was a generous and noble-minded man, and it was quite delightful to see how heartily he entered into his new occupations, as if he had really found out the right sphere of action at last.

I was struck at first sight with the improved looks of both him and my grandfather. The climate seemed to agree marvellously with the latter, who was growing stout. As to young Henry Elliott, he was half wild with exuberance of spirits. I began to feel this effect of the climate myself. The weight upon my heart was lightened; I began to take a more earnest interest in what was around me, and I soon found plenty to do. Uncle Stephen had taken a farm, on which we found a very commodious dwelling, situated about five miles from George's. It was wonderful, and of itself a pleasureable excitement, to see how earnestly the hale and hearty old man entered into his new pursuits; clearing his land

(for there was much wood about us), buying, and tending, and selling cattle, as if he had never done anything else all his life. I was his housekeeper, and I soon became learned in the mysteries of kangaroo steaks and cockatoo pies. I had a dairy, which I superintended myself; and I insisted upon having a garden, which was chiefly attended to by George and Henry Elliott during spare hours. Uncle Stephen would often laughingly say, whilst eulogising me as the best housekeeper for miles round, that he might have spared himself a deal of trouble, if he had known, years ago, that my only really useful acquirements would come naturally. My grandfather was delighted as a child with everything, though he could see nothing; I was restored to him, and his old friend was brought into the fold of Christ. Oh, we were very happy, in spite of the old turmoil, in spite of my regrets!

At the expiration of six months from our arrival we received a large packing-case and a letter from Colonel Leigh. The former was filled with books, the works of select authors, and the latter chiefly referred to an interview he had had with M. de Beausset, who was restored to health, and free, and happy to hear of my welfare. This was all he said of him, and I felt a pang resembling disappointment. Had I been hoping something more, after all? I reproved my own folly, and

roused myself, and returned to my ordinary occupations.

Three more months elapsed, and we went on very cheerily. There was no weariness in this new life of itself. I believe we all had an idea that we were growing younger every day, — at least, that was my impression with regard to myself and others. We had many neighbours within the circuit of a few miles, friendly and intelligent people, whom it was a pleasure to entertain and visit; and we had frequent calls from strangers, who were always welcome; frequent encounters with the natives, all amicable. Above everything, we were free from the terror of poverty and its consequences — that great incubus of my former life.

By contrasting my destiny with thousands who, in free and happy England, were condemned to slavish toil for the preservation of a miserable existence, I grew into a gradual thankfulness for my individual lot. What a great help it was to have everybody happy about me! There was no escaping the contagion. I heard of nothing but progress from day to day, for if any failed in this prosperous country, we were ignorant of the fact in our remote and thriving settlement.

I was one day walking about the garden, which, by dint of coaxing and scolding, I had brought Uncle Stephen to attend to in earnest,

when our female servant brought me a letter, which she said a strange gentleman, who had just arrived, and who was sitting with my grandfather, had delivered to her. It was in the handwriting of Colonel Leigh, and I opened it with trepidation. I read thus much of it at the moment:—

"My dear Daughter,

"This will be delivered to you by M. de Beausset; and for my sake, and for the sake of the devotion to yourself that he has proved so fully, I hope——"

The words swam before my eyes, and the letter shook in my hands. I was not in a much better condition, when, a few minutes afterwards, M. de Beausset himself knelt at my feet.

Well, it is no use dwelling upon what he said, or what I did in consequence. At the moment that I am writing this, a very sturdy young Victor de Beausset, five years old, is leading his blind grandfather about the garden; a little Emillie de Beausset, who has scarcely numbered three years, is feeding a tame cockatoo on the steps of the verandah, in whose shade I am sitting. Nurse is not far from me, with baby sleeping in her lap while she is knitting. Uncle Stephen is seated at a table very close to mine,

with a Bible before him, arranging the heads of his to-morrow's discourse; for to-morrow is Sunday, dear reader, and Uncle Stephen is our minister. In a large log-shed, erected especially for the purpose by M. de Beausset, we muster a rather numerous and very "respectable" congregation.

M. de Beausset is more of a lover than he was before our marriage; making up, as he says, for lost time. I expect every moment to hear his cheery voice, and meet his bright, joyous look; for he has been absent all day, with three of our men, helping George, who is still a bachelor, to recover some strayed cattle. If I had any words that would express the happiness of my present lot, I should write them down here.

Colonel Leigh (there are no words, either, to express the love I feel for him *now*) died nine months ago, leaving to me all he was possessed of, after making some charitable bequests. Jem, to whom he left a competence, has, from choice, entered the service of Mr. Delamere.

If it had been possible for me to believe, that in securing my own happiness and independence I had earned the right of fencing myself about with earthly good, chiefly as a warning against trespass to the unfortunate and the needy; if, without believing this, I could do it, and shut out from my thoughts the thousands who are

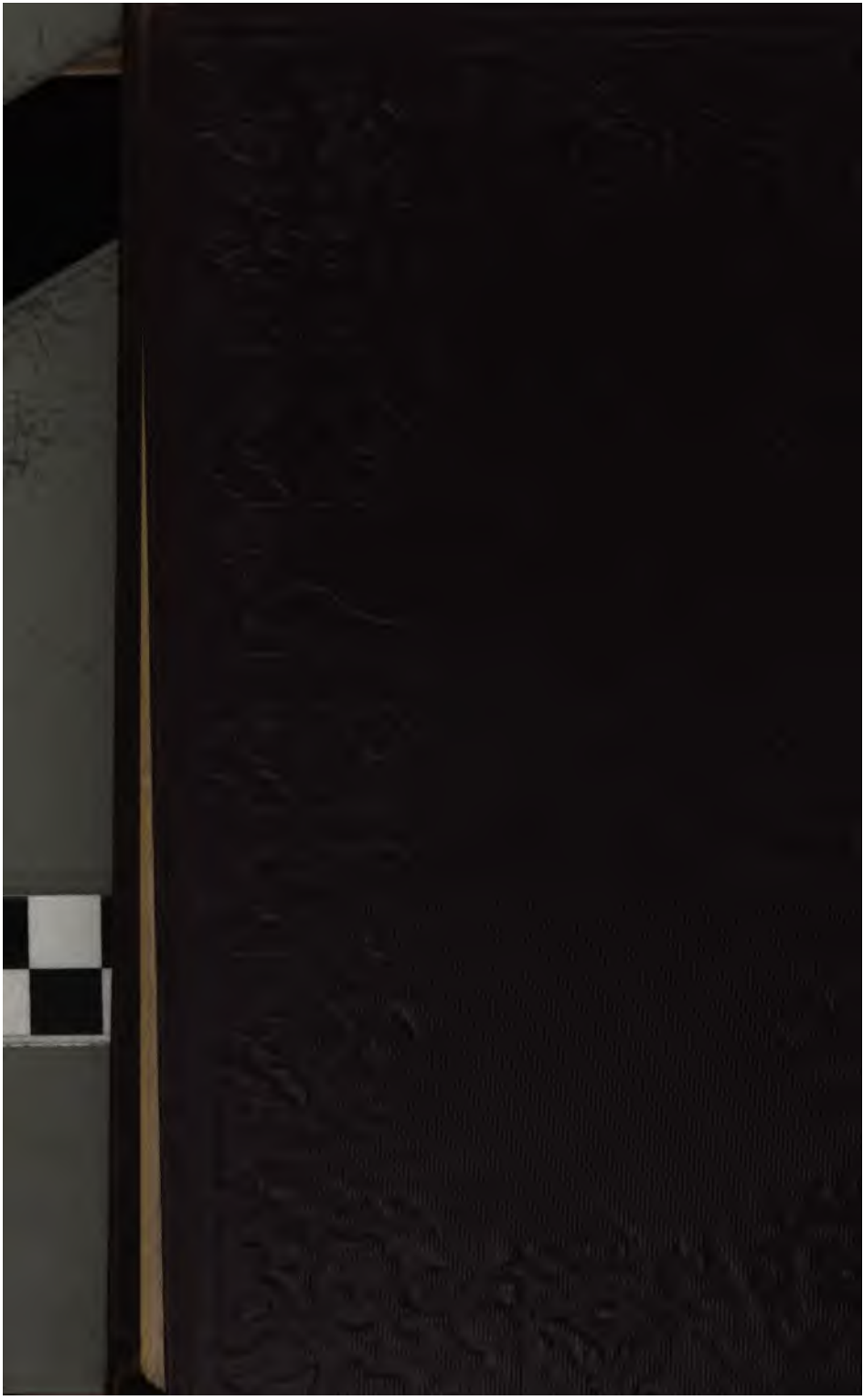
suffering in many lands, I should not have written this book, the result of my haunting dreams of the past. I owe it to God's grace first, and next to my own trial, that I have been incapable of forgetting or ceasing to feel for the privation and oppression that are at this moment crushing down souls and dooming bodies to a lingering and torturing death in the old country. To that country I would say,— Instead of teaching, as now, that want of money, and such position as money only may give, includes the want of moral rectitude, the absence of all that is elevating in thought or feeling, thereby making poverty a mighty engine for the degradation of man, and too hideous to be borne;—let the truer doctrine be promulgated, that wealth, and competence, and worldly rank, fostering as they do a selfish indulgence and a spirit of insolent superiority, tend to make men little and feeble, by giving them false views of life: for struggle is the parent of heroisms, and the heroic will, in the end, triumph over the indulged and the self-conceited; and this truth may be carried to the extent of proving a nation's prosperity to be its great weakness instead of its power.

For the great of this world, the ostentatious, the wealthy, and the comfortable, are not the truly fortunate, and never will be whilst the power of doing good is not universally recognised

as the highest privilege of humanity; never whilst adversity and trial continue to be God's chief means of drawing souls to Himself. And the experience of all time claims for them that have suffered, and through suffering learned to know themselves and understand others, a superiority of mind and will that has won for itself a proud place in the chronicles of earth.

In conclusion I would say, chiefly to the downtrodden of my own sex, Come to this land! Come from the slavery of whatever kind that is a disgrace to others, and a wearing down of life with its energies to yourselves! Come from the contempt that makes even honest bread bitter to the taste! Here the educated and the sensitive will not be tried beyond endurance by the meanness and the insolence of power; here the ignorant will not be debased by the grovelling teachings of conventionalism. If England has sent out to us many imbued only with a sordid spirit of gain, these either hurry back with their gold to the home where it promises them most consideration, or, by their reckless extravagance and want of intelligence and principle, give fair promise of coming to nothing where they are. We have a nobler population, made up of earnest strugglers for independence; men and women, who have passed through an ordeal that has purified their dross, and prepared them for an

earnest pursuit of noble purposes; plans and views worthy of immortal creatures, whose course here was not meant to be impeded by bans and difficulties that drag down and confine flesh and bone, and every sinew of the spirit, to an inadequate providing for the most sordid of all wants. I glory in the country of my adoption; I have great hope for it in the future that is to come; and though I think less than nothing of the chance prophecy of Morgotte, I believe that a noble empire will arise in this land, whose chief power will be derived from the teachings of men, who, by endurance and struggle, have learned to be just; and amongst the generations of these will be found the descendants of Thomas Marples and Victor de Beausset.

THE END.

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